

For Reference

NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THIS ROOM

For Reference

NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THIS ROOM

Ex libris
UNIVERSITATIS
ALBERTAE NSIS





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2019 with funding from
University of Alberta Libraries

<https://archive.org/details/Saroop1966>

1720 (17)
#152

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

OTHELLO AS TRAGIC FARCE

by

ANTHONY SAROOP

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled Othello as Tragic Farce, submitted by Anthony Saroop in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

This study of Othello is based upon an exploration of a pattern of opposition which is, as I have tried to show, the informing principle of the whole play. I have given in my introduction an initial instance of the working of this pattern by pointing out how Othello and Iago serve as vehicles for the opposed major themes of the play. In the second chapter I have analyzed Othello's character by concentrating upon the significance of the verbal oppositions which pervade his lines. The interrelatedness of theme, character, and diction in Othello is made manifest in this examination. I then go on in the

third chapter to treat Iago not so much as a character but as a figure who functions to generate joy in the audience mainly by serving as a metaphor for the creative process. The fourth chapter offers reasons as to why, in an ideal production of Othello, the collision between Othello and Iago would generate a spectacle in which the farcical element ought to be given far more emphasis than it has received in past productions. Moving from the nature of the spectacle to a consideration of its significance, the concluding chapter asserts that Shakespeare's use of the technique of the bringing together of opposed extremes is intended to point up the futility of action in the absurd Othello universe and, by extension, in that of the audience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---------|--|------|
| I | <u>OTHELLO</u> AS THE IMITATION OF AN ACTION . . . | 1 |
| II | OTHELLO AS A VICTIM OF TWO-VALUED ORIENTATION | 4 |
| III | IAGO AS THE ABSURD MAN | 30 |
| IV | THE FARCICAL ELEMENT IN <u>OTHELLO</u> | 47 |
| V | AN ABSURD UNIVERSE | 59 |
| | APPENDIX: A List of Paired Opposites for Othello and Iago | 68 |
| | FOOTNOTES | 81 |
| | BIBLIOGRAPHY | 86 |

CHAPTER I

OTHELLO AS THE IMITATION OF AN ACTION

I ha't, it is engender'd; Hell and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.

The traditional approach to Othello is at fault. It is at fault because it is too limited. Starting, as it does, with the assumption that Othello is a tragedy which describes the destruction of a moral order, it places far too much emphasis on the process of destruction and upon the nature of the 'good' and 'evil' agents involved in this process. In other words, it emphasizes plot and character largely to the exclusion of the other elements in the drama. In this thesis I propose, on the contrary, to approach the play from the point of view of 'core.' Francis Fergusson, who has resurrected and modified the Aristotelian idea of tragedy as the imitation of an action, offers a definition of what I mean by the term 'core' when, in referring to "the single action which seems. . .to be the spiritual content" of a play, he asserts that:

The dramatist imitates the action he has in mind, first by means of plot, then in the characters, and finally in the media of language, music, and spectacle. In a well-written play, if we understand it thoroughly, we should perceive that plot, character, and diction, and the rest spring from the same source, or, in other words, realize the same action or motive in the forms appropriate to their various media.¹

The 'core,' then, becomes the "'supreme analogue' or 'underlying theme'"² to which everything points and from which everything derives. For Fergusson, this core may be seen, although not in any simple sense, as theme; and in order to arrive at it we must discover "the postulate upon which the entire action is based."³ Citing Hamlet as an example, Fergusson has isolated the line "the times are out of joint," and if we look in Othello for a similar postulate I believe that we shall find it in Iago's "there's no remedy, 'tis the curse of service" (1, 1, 35).⁴ Service is one of the things which the play is largely about for all of the figures in the play, except for Iago, are trying to serve, and the idea of service, inasmuch as it is found within the core and therefore influences all those elements of language, character, rhythm, structure, and incident, which radiate outward from this core, partakes of the complexity of the core and is not to be understood in any simple sense. The core of Othello, as I see it, may be split into two halves, with service on one side and freedom on the other. This primary opposition gives rise to numerous subsidiary oppositions which, taken together, serve to create the structural principle of opposition which gives form to the whole play. The following chapter will be devoted to an analysis of this principle of opposition as it manifests itself in the verbal polarities which characterize Othello's lines. It will become

increasingly clear in that chapter that Othello's behaviour is determined by his past for we shall see that his whole efforts are devoted to the attempt to sustain an image of himself which belongs to the past. Othello, consequently, acts as a vehicle for the theme of service. If we consider Iago from this point of view we shall see that his major function is to give form to the idea of freedom. With these considerations firmly in mind, we need not make the mistake of those critics who start with the assumption that Othello is a hero, and who go on to conclude that Iago is a villain because he seems, on the surface of it, to be responsible for destruction. We should begin, rather, by determining the function of the characters in relation to the core of the play. Everyone in Othello is trying to serve whatever it is they feel worthy of service. We must ask what the implications of this motif are--especially when we consider what Othello was led to do because of it. Iago, who insists from the outset on his refusal to serve, comes to stand for a rather special kind of freedom. What is the nature of this freedom? It is questions such as these which must be answered before we can pass judgement on Iago, and, after answering them, we may begin to see that not only the traditional judgement, but also the act of passing judgement itself, is no longer valid.

CHAPTER II

O THELLO AS A VICTIM OF TWO-VALUED ORIENTATION

Rude am I in my speech,
And little blest with the set phrase of peace.

One of the first things which we are told about Othello is that his speech is "Horribly stuff'd with epithets of war" (1, 1, 14). G. Wilson Knight must have had this in mind when he stated that "the dominant quality of the play" is to be found in Othello's speech, and that it is a speech which reflects "the quality of soldiership" for "war is in Othello's blood."¹ So insistent is Shakespeare upon this that he even goes to the extent of giving Othello a life prior to the play's opening, and it is one which fixes Othello firmly in a wholly military context. The passage in which it occurs is that spoken before the Venetian Council:

Rude am I in my speech,
And little blest with the set phrase of peace,
For since these arms of mine had seven year's pith,
Till now some nine moons wasted, they have us'd
Their dearest action in the tented field,
And little of this great world can I speak,
More than pertains to feats of broil and battle.

(1, 3, 81-87)

Othello goes on to recall for the Council how Brabantio had impertuned him to recount the story of his life, a tale of "battles" and

"sieges" (1, 3, 130), and of how he had obliged:

Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field;
Of hair-breadth scapes i'th'imminent deadly breach;
Of being taken by the insolent foe;
And sold to slavery.

(1, 3, 134-138)

These lines have been carefully prepared for and skilfully placed by Shakespeare. They are, we should note, from Othello's first long speech. This is the first extended view we have of the major character of the play and Shakespeare obviously intended that the impression which we receive of Othello as a soldier should be very firmly fixed in our minds.

Once having recognized how much the soldier Othello is, we should then go on to try to determine exactly what kind of significance this particular piece of information has by asking ourselves: What is a soldier? To this it may be answered that a soldier is a figure who lives in a very special kind of world. He lives in a world in which there are only two realities, enemy and friend. It is in one sense a very attractive world for it is one of the few in which a perplexed humanity is assured of finding certainty. Just as the soldier can place absolute trust in a friend to protect him, so also can he be absolutely certain that, given the opportunity, the enemy will do all in his power to destroy him. The soldier is also absolutely certain of two other things. The figures who people his world can be recognized im-

mediately for what they are, whether enemy or friend, by the way in which they behave towards him. Also, once he has made these identifications, the soldier's duty is plain. Just as he can be certain that he is obliged to protect a friend, his duty in regard to the foe is similarly clear-cut--he must destroy it. In short, the soldier lives in a world of opposed absolutes and his position in relation to them is one of certainty.

In any other kind of world than the one in which the soldier lives such an orientation would be unrealistic for the reality of all non-military contexts presents us with no such absolutes and therefore with no such certainty. We are instead faced with multiplicity and diversity, and with a whole spectrum of shades or degrees of difference, and these call for correspondingly finer and subtler acts of judgement. Nevertheless, there are many people to be found in civilian life who, for one reason or another, do behave as if a neat and certain dichotomy were the structural principle which orders the world. Such behaviour is, of course, unrealistic. The soldier, however, behaves sensibly and realistically when he acts in this way for he is behaving in accordance with the reality which surrounds him. In its widest sense, behaviour may be said to consist of actions, thoughts, and words, and because the soldier lives in a world of opposed absolutes he will tend not only to act, but also to think and

speak in terms of opposites. The general semanticists have defined the mode of thought which tends to "see things in terms of two values, good and bad, [friend and enemy, as_a] two-valued orientation." They go on to add that:

When we are fighting, moreover, we are reduced at once to such a two-valued orientation, nothing in the world exists except ourselves and our opponent. Indeed, the two-valued orientation. . . may be regarded as an inevitable accompaniment to combat.²

The reader may well ask at this point what all of this has to do with the play under discussion. Certainly, before the play begins, Othello was a soldier, and the applicability of the foregoing to an Othello who might have been depicted as wielding a sword amid "feats of broil, and battle" (1, 3, 87) is evident. But, as we well know, this is not how Shakespeare does depict him. Othello is portrayed not as a warrior but as a husband, and not in a military so much as in a domestic context. Since he has been translated into a new environment and one which differs radically from that of the battlefield, we would naturally expect that he should now begin to order his behaviour in accordance with the new reality by which he is surrounded and that he should eschew the double-valued mode of thought as no longer valid in this new situation. We should expect this for we realize that Othello is in a new kind of context, and that it is one in which to view life as if it were as clear-cut as a battlefield simply will not work. We realize this. Othello, however, does not, and this is the point. His

predicament arises because of a failure to adjust to his new environment. His entire life, spent as it was in a world of opposed absolutes, has been such as to stamp indelibly upon his mind the 'truth' of the double-valued approach to life. His error lies in his failure to realize that the new situation in which he finds himself is not to be equated with that of a friendly camp and that therefore the military world-view by which he has previously guided himself is no longer applicable or valid.

We saw earlier that the nature of the soldier's world-view may be deduced from the way in which he acts, thinks, and speaks. Proof of the assertion that Othello fails to understand the nature of his new situation because he continues to think in terms applicable only to a military situation is therefore to be found in his actions and in his words. Actions, as a perusal of the critics will show, are notoriously open to conflicting interpretations. Language, however, or at least the specific language pattern we shall be looking at, is not. Consequently, we have in such a language pattern objective textual evidence upon which our analysis may be based. We shall therefore first examine the language which Shakespeare has given to Othello and then, in the light of our discoveries, go on to analyze the action.

As we have noted, part of the tendency to view the world as if it were made up of opposed absolutes is to be seen in the habit of speak-

ing as if it were so constructed, and this we find exemplified to a remarkable degree in Othello's speech. From his first lines to his very last his language contains frequent references to opposites. In the first lines which we hear him speak he says to Iago:

My services, which I have done the signiory,
Shall out-tongue his complaints.
(1, 2, 18-19)

A few lines later, in respect to his marriage, he says:

I would not my unhoused free condition
Put into circumscription and confine,
For the sea's worth.
(1, 2, 26-28)

Here, the opposition between deeds and words and between freedom and confinement is evident. The examples so far cited are not particularly obvious or vivid but as we continue through the play they gain an added importance when they come to be seen in relation to the other instances which begin to fall thicker and faster as the drama's various climaxes are reached. A more obvious and picturesque example may be seen in Othello's:

The tyrant custom, most grave senators,
Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war
My thrice-driven bed of down.
(1, 3, 229-231)

Othello's linguistic mannerism, as some of these examples testify, can indeed attain to a poetic beauty in which metaphor is ornamental.

However, although making for poetic beauty, the mode of thought implicit in such a speech-pattern is not, when it has become displaced from its proper context, a pretty thing at all. To appreciate this we need to go no further than Othello's "Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore" (3, 3, 365). The qualities of absoluteness and opposition are very much in evidence here, but much more important is that for the first time we begin to see just how dangerous the double-valued orientation can become. Perhaps the most important of all such verbal polarities is Othello's observation, "Rude am I in my speech, /And little blest with the set phrase of peace" (1, 3, 81-82). These lines perform several important functions with remarkable economy. We can see at once that Othello here is setting up a kind of opposition between what he sees as his own bluff, frank, forthright, and soldierly mode of speech, and that of the Venetian court circle which he feels differs from his own, not fundamentally, but only in ornament. His way, as he sees it, is that of the "round unvarnish'd tale" (1, 3, 90) without the ornamental and graceful rhetorical flourishes of the courtier. This strongly suggests that just as he thinks that the speech of others does not differ in any significant way from his own, so he must also think that their mode of thought is not essentially different. The real importance of the lines under discussion, however, lies in the fact that they do refer to speech. Othello's speech is indeed

'rude' and an example of the way in which it is rude is ironically contained within the statement itself in the form of a paired opposite. It is rude because it does not accurately reflect the reality which surrounds Othello.

These lines, then, offer us an important clue to the understanding of Othello's character. The 'rudeness' of speech reflects a 'rudeness' of thought which helps to bring about the tragedy. Harley Granville-Barker has pointed out that the "verse of a play. . . may be in large part keyed to the interpreting of the play's central figure"³ and the truth of this remark can be seen if we look closely at the text of Othello. If we do so we shall find that there are over two hundred instances of paired opposites in the play.⁴

Since speech, thought, and actions are all intimately related to one another, the mode of thought which is reflected in the speech pattern we have been examining ought also to find outlet in action if Othello is to be a consistent character. We shall therefore go on to look at the character and actions of the Moor.

Othello's total behaviour can be seen to be governed consistently by a complex of attitudes all of which have in common a quality which may be described as 'absoluteness.' This can perhaps be made clearer by looking at the most obvious example in the play--Othello's attitude to Iago.

Othello sees Iago as absolutely honest and as one, therefore, in whom absolute trust may be placed. This is so for Iago is a fellow-soldier, and because Othello continues to conduct himself as if he were on a battlefield he continues to see Iago as a positive absolute of the type which he is accustomed to being surrounded by when in a friendly camp. He is, as many critics have pointed out, a man of faith, and he is able to manifest such faith because of an unshakeable certainty of belief in the figures who populate his soldier's world. His view of a friend is brought out very clearly when he says to Iago:

Thou dost conspire against thy friend, Iago,
If thou but thinkest him wrong'd, and makest his ear
A stranger to thy thoughts.

(3, 3, 146-148)

A friend is one who is completely open and honest and in whom, therefore, because he is a positive absolute, one may place absolute trust. Othello therefore sees Iago less as a person than as a type. External reality, as we know, presents us with no such types. We are not surrounded by static, fixed and unchanging entities, but rather by dynamic and constantly changing processes, by flux, and because of this all categories can only be of limited applicability. Othello's error lies in his failure to realize this and it is from this error that qualities such as his faith and his 'free and open nature' arise. In terms of the evaluative system by which Othello orders his life everything must be either positive or negative and everything is an absolute. Be-

cause all issues are clear-cut the business of living becomes for Othello similarly straightforward for: "if we have only two values . . . we have only two ways of acting toward a given. . . situation."⁵

In the face of experience Othello's task, as he sees it, is to classify and having once classified he must then go on to act in accordance with what he feels is right.

Othello's position may be likened to that of a guard on sentry-duty who must identify everything which comes within his range of vision as friendly or hostile, and who is absolutely certain as to his duty once identification has been established. His duty imposes upon him the moral obligation to protect what is friendly and to destroy the hostile. This analogy is interesting for it directs us to another facet of Othello's character. The time which elapses after a fact of experience has impinged itself upon the consciousness of the sentry, and before classification has been made, must inevitably be one of great tension, and the degree of this tension can be expected to increase as the time-lapse between perception and recognition increases.

While he cannot be sure that the new fact of experience is either hostile or friendly, a state of anxiety must prevail and his total being must strain towards a resolution--a resolution which will take the form of classification followed by decisive action. If we apply this to Othello we shall see that this, indeed, does seem to be the way

that he reacts to new experience. M. R. Ridley has pointed out that "the thing most likely to break Othello's normal control is failure to get a straight answer to a straight question."⁶ The truth of this is to be seen when Othello is trying to discover the cause of the brawl in Cyprus. He questions in turn Iago, Cassio, and Montano. When he fails to get a 'straight answer' from either of them he breaks out with:

Now by heaven
 My blood begins my safer guides to rule,
 And passion having my best judgement collied,
 Assays to lead the way. Zounds, if I stir,
 Or do but lift this arm, the best of you
 Shall sink in my rebuke: give me to know
 How this foul rout began, who set it on,
 And he that is approv'd in this offence,
 Though he had twinn'd with me, both at a birth,
 Shall lose me: what, in a town of war,
 Yet wild, the people's hearts brim full of fear,
 To manage private and domestic quarrels,
 In night, and on the court and guard of safety?
 'Tis monstrous. Iago, who began?
 (2, 3, 195-208)

The tension which derives from a condition of uncertainty is very evident here, and the degree of pain which it causes will be seen later to be even greater when the uncertainty is related to Desdemona. When Othello demands of Desdemona: "Fetch me that handkerchief, my mind misgives" (3, 4, 87), he is so overwrought that he is hardly able to speak. He is only able to repeat three times "The handkerchief!" (90, 91, 94) before he exits upon the curse "Zounds!" (95). The unen-

durability of uncertainty, the excruciating tension which it gives rise to in Othello, is once more evident in his tortured:

By the world,
 I think my wife be honest, and think she is not,
 I think that thou art just, and think thou art not;
 I'll have some proof: my name, that was as fresh
As Dian's visage, is now begrin'd, and black
As mine own face: if there be cords, or knives,
 Poison, or fire, or suffocating streams,
 I'll not endure it: would I were satisfied!
 (3, 3, 389-396)

Othello would have 'proof,' he would have certainty, and it is noteworthy that the certainty which he begins immediately to seek by questioning Desdemona, and later Emilia, is that of his wife's falseness. Othello is convinced of the truth of Iago's insinuations by line 271 of the temptation scene: "She's gone, I am abus'd, and my relief/ Must be to loathe her" (3, 3, 271-272). He is convinced, but it is a rational conviction only, and hence part of the reason for his terrible perplexity. His double-valued mode of thought causes him to think that Iago must be right but he is unable to feel the rightness of the accusation. He therefore embarks on a pathetic attempt to strengthen his rational conviction in what must be an unconscious hope that in this way will come the necessary emotional conviction. Without the certainty which he craves he exists in a state of intolerable tension which can only be completely resolved through action. It is, as he himself says: "to be once in doubt, [in the sense of doubting his

wife's fidelity and therefore of being assured of her infidelity] /Is once to be resolv'd" (3, 3, 183-184). Action must follow automatically upon recognition and as we can see, although it is an action dictated by 'physical' necessity, more important are the ethical considerations involved. In short, tension must be relieved and moral obligations fulfilled. This is Othello's instinctive reaction as a soldier to new experience.

The proper action to take after identification has been established, in that it derives from an absolute certainty of the rightness of the double-valued system of classification and of the moral rightness of the soldier's duty in relation to new experience, must be similarly absolute; it must be:

Like to the Pontic sea,
Whose icy current, and compulsive course,
Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on. . .
(3, 3, 460-462)

It must be untempered by considerations of a personal nature for it must "ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love" (465) but proceed with "violent pace" (464) in accordance with the dictates of nature and conscience.

Othello thinks in terms of opposites, in terms of good and evil, and the naïveté of those who think in this way is to be seen in the way they go about classifying the negative absolute. Such persons tend

invariably to condemn as wholly negative any fact of experience, any state of affairs, which deviates, even if only in the slightest way, from that which they hold to be positive. For Othello: "A horned man's monster, and a beast" (4, 1, 62). One flaw, and the positive is converted into its opposite, and into, more often than not, an equally absolute opposite. An excellent example of this ethical absolutism, and one which foreshadows and to a certain extent explains the later death of Desdemona, may be seen in Othello's answer to the question put to him by the First Senator who asked whether he had employed any underhand means in capturing the affections of Desdemona. Othello replies:

I do beseech you,
Send for the lady to the Sagittar,
And let her speak of me before her father;
If you do find me foul in her report,
The trust, the office, I do hold of you,
Not only take away, but let your sentence
Even fall upon my life.

(1, 3, 114-120)

We saw earlier that pursuant to the establishment of identification, action automatically ensues, and the suggestion that it is a mainly ethical motivation which prompts such action is to be seen here in Othello's belief that the Venetian Council will have a moral obligation to destroy him if he is found by them to be "foul." The suggestion is strong enough to justify being referred to as a moral imperative to destroy evil.

This moral imperative to stamp out the negative is seen once more, this time in a somewhat modified form, in the way Othello resolves the brawl of Act II, Scene III. Othello, after having heard Iago's thoroughly slanted account of what has happened, relieves Cassio of his position with the words: "Cassio, I love thee, / But never more be officer of mine" (239-240). Othello, we note, places duty before love and casts out Cassio for one error--a breach of discipline. There is no trial and he goes only on the word of Iago. The issue for Othello is quite clear-cut and will admit of no modifications, even if the guilty party were his twin brother. The error is *grⁱevous* for internecine conflict is a dreadful evil to the military man as it threatens the foundations of his whole world-view. Othello, then, in the face of this threat to order, acts decisively. The next day, however, when Cassio approaches Emilia to induce her to have Desdemona intercede for him with Othello, Emilia replies that:

The general and his wife are talking of it,
And she speaks for you stoutly: the Moor replies,
That he you hurt is of great fame in Cyprus
And great affinity, and that in wholesome wisdom
He might not but refuse you; but he protests he loves you,
And needs no other suitor but his likings
To take the safest occasion by the front,
To bring you in again.

(3, 1, 44-51)

The opposition here between 'wisdom' and 'love' becomes most significant when seen in conjunction with his earlier "Cassio, I love thee, /

But never more be officer of mine" (2, 3, 239-240) and his later "ne'er ebb to humble love" (3, 3, 465). Othello here is in the curious position of loving a negative force. What is happening is that the new environment is beginning to assert itself and therefore the applicability of absoluteness is breaking down. Othello recognizes in the incident that he has a moral obligation, but because he is able to put a stop to his officer's negative activities without having to physically destroy him there is no serious conflict within him at this point. There is just a slight discomfort which is felt as a conflict between personal feelings and duty, and which is not likely to occur too often in the soldier's life as one does not normally love the enemy. The opposition between love and duty evident in Othello's lines is interesting also because it shows us that although his reasoning is wrong, his 'wholesome wisdom' tells him that he was right to cashier Cassio. We know that to think in this way is wrong for a single error does not create a total negative. Yet Othello redeems himself to some extent by continuing to 'love' Cassio and demonstrates this by not refusing to entertain the thought of his possible future reinstatement.

The total situation admirably foreshadows the one which is to come about between Othello and Desdemona where the conflict within Othello himself will assume huge proportions because he will be faced with a situation in which he does feel morally obliged to physically

destroy someone he loves. In that he does kill Desdemona he demonstrates the truth of the idea that his fundamental tragic flaw is intellectual in nature. It is intellectual because it is prompted by an impersonal and faulty mode of thought--because reason has usurped the throne which properly belongs to love.

As we now have a fuller understanding of Othello's character in that we have determined that he is a victim of a double-valued orientation, and as we have seen how such a mode of thought leads its holder to behave, we may now go on to examine two central actions in which Othello is involved: his temptation by Iago and the murder of Desdemona.

Othello is an African soldier whose whole mental outlook is conditioned to the exigencies of the battlefield. He has, as Leavis says, "been well provided by nature to meet all the trials a life of action has exposed him to." In that he has moved from the battlefield into a situation which calls for a different set of attitudes, mental habits, and ways of reacting to experience, we can see that it is also true that "the trials facing him now are of a different order."⁷ It should also be quite obvious that the tragedy comes about precisely because Othello does not appreciate the radical difference between military and domestic, because he does not see that for:

weighing the various and complicated desires that civilization gives rise to, an increasingly finely graduated scale of values is necessary, as well as foresight, lest in satisfying one desire we frustrate even more important ones.⁸

In short, he does not see that it is not a double-valued but a multi-valued orientation which is necessary to resolve his new problems. It is a condition of Iago's success that Othello's character should be thus rigid. It is indeed a condition of tragedy itself for the "heroic core of tragedy lies in this refusal of the hero to accommodate himself."⁹ Lerner feels that there "should be something more positive. . . early on to suggest that this figure will turn into a rash and most unfortunate man."¹⁰ The emphasis here is misleading for it suggests that Othello changes and it is not so much Othello as the situation which changes. It is, as we have said, precisely because Othello does not change that the catastrophe occurs.

The knowledge of Othello with which Shakespeare equips us in the first half of the play is such as to enable us to predict accurately what will happen when the new and more complex environment begins to assert itself. Othello will continue to behave as if he were in a friendly camp and surrounded by positive forces. If any one of these begins to manifest signs which cannot be construed as positive it will become for Othello a negative and he will react towards it instinctively and in such a way as to arrest its action. His motivation will derive both from his nature and his conscience; from nature, for the

tension set up when once a new and unclassified fact is perceived can only be relieved through action, and from conscience because only through action can he fulfill what he feels is a moral obligation. Because his motivation has this ethical component, Othello will refuse to allow personal feelings to interfere with what reason tells him he is morally obliged to perform, even when such feelings amount to love. In other words, he will, if need be, physically destroy something which he loves if its behaviour can be construed as negative and if destruction is the only way to arrest its action. His actions, thought, and language in the first part of the play have been consistent and have been such as to justify this prediction, and this is in fact exactly what does happen.

Iago's task is quite simple for:

nothing is meaningless or accidental under. . . evaluative systems [such as Othello's double-valued orientation], because everything one sees, if it comes to notice at all, must be accounted for under one of the two values. . . . There is never any way of evaluating any new experience, process, or object other than by such terms as good. . . or bad.¹¹

All that Iago need do is to make Othello aware of some hitherto unperceived fact associated with Desdemona and one which may be construed as negative. Because Iago is a comrade in arms and therefore a positive absolute in the fullest sense, and because Desdemona is a relatively unknown quantity, though accepted by Othello as positive because she was found by Othello within the 'friendly camp,' the fact need be nothing

more than a manifestation on Iago's part of a feeling of uneasiness in relation to her. His "Ha, I like not that" (3, 3, 35) shows us that this in fact is how he does begin his campaign of undermining Othello's faith in Desdemona. Iago here employs the technique of discomfort and reticence which has been carefully rehearsed previously when by behaving in exactly the same fashion he led Othello to suspect he was withholding information which would cast an even worse light on Cassio's part in the Cyprus brawl. Now, after having reinforced Othello's belief in him as "a man that's just" (3, 3, 126), Othello can do no other than think that Iago is withholding similarly damning information concerning Desdemona, for:

This fellow's of exceeding honesty,
And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit,
Of human dealing.

(3, 3, 262-264)

Not only is Iago a fellow-soldier who has demonstrated his good will, he is also a Venetian and he makes strong capital of the fact that as such he is better able to assess Desdemona than is the alien Othello.

The emotion which is generated in Othello by Iago's insinuations is extremely complex and although it does contain an element of sexual jealousy it is far from the pure sexual jealousy which many take it to be. This supposed pure and simple 'jealousy' is composed first of all of the instinctive tension of the soldier when confronted by a threatening and hostile force. Desdemona, as we know, does not represent a

physical threat but her behaviour does constitute a threat to something which is if anything even more dear to Othello--his honor. He cannot allow himself to continue to be cuckolded, to let Cassio and Desdemona make him "A fixed figure, for the time of scorn/To point his slow unmoving fingers at" (4, 2, 55-56). This is intolerable to him for his whole being is founded on his moral integrity. He is, as a soldier, an ethical symbol in the sense that his behaviour in relation to both enemy and friend is motivated, not by reasons of expediency, but by considerations of moral obligations. The absoluteness which characterizes him as a soldier derives from the certain knowledge that just as he is morally obliged to protect a friend, so is he similarly obliged to destroy an enemy. This is how he has always conducted himself and he is proud of it. Hence his tremendous rage, for by being cuckolded he has been bereft of his moral integrity because, for Othello, "A horned man's a monster, and a beast" (4, 1, 62). Desdemona's adultery, in his eyes, suffices to translate him from a positive and absolute symbol of morality into a figure which stands for its opposite, for immorality. His predicament is extraordinarily complex for, as we remember, Othello cannot allow personal feelings to influence his decisions. Yet the nature of the betrayal cannot but excite a desire for personal revenge for he has been betrayed not only by his wife but also by a military subordinate. His

position both as general and husband has been compromised. While Desdemona and Cassio continue, as he thinks, to make a cuckold of him, he becomes, in relation to Desdemona, a symbol of immorality, and in relation to Cassio a symbol of the soldier who shirks his duty. In his own eyes, therefore, he becomes negative in the fullest sense. His reason, prompted by Iago, tells him that both Cassio and Desdemona must die if justice is to prevail. This is so for:

If good is "absolutely good" and evil is "absolutely evil," the logic of a primitive, two-valued orientation demands that "evil" be exterminated by every means available. Murder . . . becomes, under this orientation, a moral duty--to be carried out systematically and conscientiously.¹²

Yet, because the issue touches Othello so personally, if he does kill Cassio and Desdemona in an attempt to restore his moral integrity he will also of necessity be satisfying the purely personal desire for revenge. An impartial and morally motivated action undertaken from a sense of duty as general to restore order will therefore restore Othello's moral integrity both as general and husband, and yet it will also, paradoxically, compromise his integrity because of the element of personal revenge and because the personal desire to restore moral integrity must of necessity enter into and thereby taint his motive, for one flaw, as we remember, suffices to negate. The whole issue is further complicated because of the love which Othello has for Desdemona. His reason and his sense of duty tell him he should act but

his feelings stand in the way. Because of the way in which he thinks he is rationally convinced of her infidelity, yet he remains throughout emotionally unconvinced. The rightness of his instincts as opposed to the falsity of his reasoning is brought out quite clearly in such lines as:

If she be false, O, then heaven mocks itself,
I'll not believe it.

(3, 3, 282-283)

The same conflict is evident in:

I think my wife be honest, and think she is not.
(3, 3, 390)

Othello thinks that his wife is evil but he finds it impossible to feel that she is so. He must kill that which he loves and hence springs his overpowering anguish and perplexity, for in the motivation to destroy, the personal element of revenge may compromise his integrity, and if he allows his wife to live the personal element of love may also compromise him; yet his sense of duty must be fulfilled and his integrity restored. Othello must kill Desdemona and the 'purity' of motive one might ideally prefer to see is rendered unattainable despite his straining towards it because of the complex and involved nature of the circumstances. The structural principle of contrast, of opposites, which is seen at its simplest level in the way Othello uses language, can therefore be seen to have been carried by Shakespeare into the central act of the play, thereby result-

ing in a supreme irony.

What, then, of the 'real' as opposed to the 'imagined' source of Othello's anguish? An obvious clue is to be found in his: "Nature would not invest herself in such shadowing passion without some instruction. It is not words that shake me thus" (4, 1, 39-41). There is a profound irony in these lines for it is precisely Iago's skillful use of words, along with Othello's tendency to take words for the reality and inference for fact, which has led him into his tragic dilemma. Harley Granville-Barker has spoken of "the cumulative effect of the iteration of some single significant word"¹³ in the play and one immediately recalls the frequent uses of 'honest.' Such emphases may be interpreted as verbal checkpoints of sorts for part of their function seems to be to stress the idea of the absoluteness and rigidity of the character who uses them because the words themselves are for Othello static, unchanging, and fixed. This habit is related to the double-valued mode of thought for it is characteristic of the semantically naive that they accept and behave in relation to the symbol as if they were in the presence of the thing symbolized. For evidence that Othello does behave in exactly this way we have an excellent example in the passage quoted above from the first scene of Act IV where Othello, after having been told of Cassio's supposed confession by Iago, falls down in a fit:

Lie with her, lie on her? . . . It is not words that shake me thus. Pish! Noses, ears and lips. Is't possible? - Confess? - Handkerchief? - O devil!

(4,1, 35-43)

Other examples of verbal checkpoints are the way in which Othello is tricked into thinking Cassio is speaking of Desdemona when he is speaking of Bianca (4, 1, 103-165); the way Othello reacts to Iago's report of Cassio's 'dream' (3, 3, 419-432); the way in which Othello mistakenly takes Roderigo's "O villain that I am!" (5, 1, 29) as a confession coming from Cassio; and Othello hearing 'mad' and his ensuing rage when Desdemona has said only "I am glad" (4, 1, 233). Such verbal distortions admirably reflect the underlying semantic distortion. Another very revealing semantic touchstone is found in the paired opposite: "I'll not expostulate with her, lest her body and beauty unprovide my mind" (4, 1, 200-202). Here, the body, which is Desdemona's and chaste and is the true reality, becomes the negative component of the equation, and the rational mind which harbours the unreality becomes for Othello positive. It is a sentence which beautifully epitomizes the inadequacy of his mode of thought. It is partly because Othello reacts to words as if they were things and to things as if they were words that the tragedy comes about. He does not realize that words do not accurately reflect external reality because the qualities which characterize them are not to be found in

external reality. Hence, his:

resulting behaviour, when carried to its logical conclusion, is certainly horrible from any humanitarian point of view. But there is an even graver objection from what might be called a technological point of view, namely, that action resulting from two-valued orientations notoriously fails to achieve its objectives. . . . When guided by it for any purposes other than fighting, we practically always achieve results opposite from those intended.¹⁴

In this play, the good which Othello strives so desperately to sustain is destroyed. The very characteristics which have sufficed to raise him to the peak of military eminence become Othello's tragic flaw.

The remarkable couplet into which Shakespeare has put Othello's last words indicates quite clearly both the nature of the Moor's blindness and the fact that he remains blind to the very end:

I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee, no way but this,
Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.
 (5, 2, 359-360)

CHAPTER III

IAGO AS THE ABSURD MAN

I am not what I am.

The traditional view of Iago as a brilliant and evil young man is untenable. An outline of the reasons which render it so would include such objections as that Iago is a victim of the double-valued orientation, that he is a thief of ideas, that he is not at all the shrewd analyst of character which it is maintained he is, and that the play hinges to a far greater extent upon coincidence than upon intrigue. More important than all of these, however, is the fact that the above judgement of Iago in no way relates him to the 'core' of the play.

In a tragedy the hero is a figure who finds himself trapped within a situation which he usually has had little or nothing to do with bringing about. The situation, we may say, has been imposed from outside by destiny or the gods, and the hero, in refusing to accommodate himself to the new situation, struggles against it and is destroyed. In King Lear there is no external agent for the force which imposes the opening situation; there is no entity which serves as a vehicle for destiny, for it is part of Lear's own function, by

assigning his crown away, to impose the situation which leads to his destruction. Othello, however, corresponds more closely in this respect to Hamlet and to Macbeth: there exists in all three plays an objectification of fate. Once the ghost has spoken, Hamlet is doomed. Once the witches have delivered their prophecy, Macbeth is also lost. Similarly, as I tried to show in the last chapter, once Iago has spoken, Othello is lost. It is part of Iago's function in the play to act as the force which imposes the situation which leads to Othello's destruction. And here is yet another reason why the traditional idea of Iago as brilliant and evil is untenable. If he were it would imply the existence of an evil and malignant force in the universe which was deliberately and consistently working against man, and this would clash with the absurd content of the play--absurd, because Othello offers us the vision of a world in which everything becomes meaningless. Hence, Iago in his function as destiny operates in an arbitrary fashion, operates as a force which is indifferent to man--a force which simply creates for the sake of creating and to which the moral principles evolved by man have no meaning whatsoever:

Now: whether he kill Cassio,
Or Cassio him, or each do kill the other,
Every way makes my game.
(5, 1, 12-14)

Destiny is indifferent, and if it may be said to have an emotion it is one of the 'joy' which derives from the creation of new situations. Conse-

quently, Iago may be said to be evil only in the sense that death is an evil. Iago, as destiny, imposes situations--limitations--and death is the ultimate limitation. Iago, in short, is, on one plane of meaning, a metaphor for destiny.

In that Iago is a metaphor for destiny he comes also, by extension, to serve as a vehicle for the idea of the artistic process. This is so for both destiny and the artistic process share certain qualities in common. Both create for the sake of creating and both are 'detached' from the objects of their creation. Destiny is a force to which everything is 'meaningless' for it is man who imposes meanings upon things. Similarly, for the artist, that which he creates is 'meaningless' in the sense that it is unreal. Shakespeare loves both Othello and Iago, but it is a love which does not shirk to inflict suffering and death upon that which is loved because it is combined with a full and unceasing awareness of the fictional nature of the objects of creation. We have to do here with the emotional detachment of the artist. The task of the artist is to create fictions. The great artist is the one, like Shakespeare and Chaucer, who realizes that there is no necessary relationship between his fictional world and the real world. He is hence able to offer us a fullness of vision--a vision which incorporates a whole spectrum. The lesser artist is the one like Dickens who confuses his illusion with reality, who is thereby led to identify with

one or other of his characters, and who consequently offers us only a limited vision of things. If we identify with Othello, we see the world which Shakespeare has created through the eyes of Othello. In short, we come away from the play with a distorted, because limited, view of things. Our task is to aspire to the objectivity--to the detachment of Shakespeare himself--and to neither hate nor love Othello or Iago but rather to see both as artistic fictions; to see them as metaphors and not as characters. The proper response to the play should not be dictated by moral considerations. The proper response, on the contrary, should be aesthetic. Such a response enables us to share in a joy of the order of that which the artist experienced at the moment of creating, and it is the only one which will reveal to us that one of Iago's most important functions is to generate joy in the audience. This joy is of a very special and very intense kind because not only is Iago an object of artistic creation, he is also a metaphor for the artistic process; he is both created thing and creator.

Iago is associated throughout the play with birth metaphors.

"There are many events in the womb of time, which will be delivered" (1, 3, 369-370), says Iago, and he joyfully sets out to help deliver them. In behaving like this he may be seen to be the exact opposite of Othello who has established during his military career only one pattern and who strives desperately throughout to sustain it, although the situation

has changed completely. Othello attempts to transcend human limitations by ignoring the passage of time and the operation of a destiny which brings new situations into being. Iago, knowing he cannot transcend fate, joins forces with it. He sets up and breaks patterns continuously and a facet of the absurdity which characterizes the Othello universe becomes evident when we see that Iago destroys to create and creates to destroy. This activity becomes for us a source of joy once we recognize the unreality of what is taking place before our eyes. We share in the joy of the creative artist, Shakespeare, when we begin to see, like him, that everything in the Othello world is meaningless. Our joy is further intensified because Iago is such a complex, bewildering, many-faceted figure. He is not one but a whole series of characters, and the facility with which he assumes a new role with each scene, each changed situation, is fascinating. He is an amorphous, protean, and constantly changing entity, like a vapour, and ultimately he cannot be pinned down and defined.

The whole series of transformations which Iago undergoes--from disgruntled subordinate to loving servant, from the merry-maker who calls for wine four times to the ensign who is morally shocked by his lieutenant's predilection for drink--are immensely entertaining in themselves. But the emotion which is generated in the audience is enhanced once we understand the implications of

Iago's reasons for behaving in this way--once we begin to see that Iago stands in relation to Othello as Shakespeare stands in relation to the audience. Just as Iago is foisting an illusion off upon Othello, so is Shakespeare foisting an illusion off upon us. Because we are party to Iago's soliloquies and his behaviour in the presence of others than Othello, we cannot share Othello's belief in Desdemona's guilt. But, what we do share with Othello, if, like him, we fail to see that an illusion is being foisted off upon us by Shakespeare, is the belief that Desdemona could have been guilty--that there existed a passage of time during which an adulterous liaison could have taken place. There was no such time.

'Tis pitiful, but yet Iago knows
That she with Cassio hath the act of shame
A thousand times committed.

(5, 2, 211-213)

We question the truth of Othello's statement, but we do not question its validity. The arrival of Othello, Desdemona, Cassio, and Iago in Cyprus was followed that same evening by the nuptial celebrations which led to Cassio being cashiered. The very following night sees Desdemona's murder. If we fail to realize that the things which are asserted to have happened, by both Iago and Shakespeare, could not possibly have happened, we are allowing Shakespeare to make just as much of a fool of us as Iago makes of Othello. This discovery gives rise to the recognition of the farcical element in the play which

I shall deal with in the next chapter. The value of this discovery as a source of pleasurable emotion--of a joy which derives directly from Iago's function--should be evident.

Both Shakespeare and Iago, then, are playing games: the former with us and the latter with Othello. In order to reveal why Iago behaves as he does we can go on to compare him to Othello.

Othello is inflexible, rigorous, and lives in a world of absolutes. He is like this, not so much because he is a soldier, as that he is trying to be a soldier. He is, in short, determined by his past and he becomes, in existentialist terminology, a person who is leading an inauthentic existence. Othello refuses to accept his freedom and chooses instead to become a slave to the illusion that things have meaning, or, more specifically, to the belief that his self-image has some sort of immutable and transcendent value. He is concerned throughout only with sustaining this image of himself as a great soldier; an image which was created in the past, which no doubt had meaning in the past, but which is meaningless in the new domestic situation in which he finds himself. Following the brawl, Othello enters in a rage, saying:

What, in a town of war,
Yet wild, the people's hearts brim full of fear,
To manage private and domestic quarrels,
In night, and on the court and guard of safety?
(2, 3, 204-207)

Othello, here, is playing at being the stern and efficient general. He is play-acting for it is not at all 'a town of war.' We know this because he himself told us earlier: "News, friends, our wars are done, the Turks are drown'd" (2, 1, 202). Other instances of a similar nature exist and from them we can conclude that Othello, like Shakespeare and Iago, is also playing a game, but that his is a sorry kind of game because it consists of negating the present in the name of the past. It is sorry for all of Othello's energies are directed towards making of himself an object instead of a man. He excuses his present behaviour by reference to the past just as a stone which is rolling down a hill will tell us that it is rolling because it was pushed. But a man is not a stone. T. S. Eliot, in speaking of Othello's last speech, has said: "I have always felt that I have never read a more terrible exposure of human weakness--of universal human weakness--than the last great speech of Othello."¹ Othello's is a lamentable speech because it reveals to us that he has made of himself an object. The speech exemplifies the all too human trait of hiding behind deterministic excuses by postulating a non-existent essence or human nature to account for one's acts. It is an evasion of the life which offers man freedom of will. Jean-Paul Sartre, in speaking of the inauthentic, has said: "Those who hide from this total freedom, in a guise of solemnity or with deterministic excuses, I

shall call cowards."²

If Othello is 'being,' then Iago is 'becoming'; if Othello acts as a vehicle for the idea of service to the illusory, then Iago carries the idea of the freedom which derives from an awareness of the true nature of reality; if Othello is the inauthentic man, then Iago is his opposite and authentic. "I am not what I am" (1, 1, 65), says Iago, and this is true for Iago is free; he is free from illusions, free from both past and future, and he is therefore free to change as the world changes. He is aware of the illusory nature of reality, of the fact that there is not one world but as many as there are persons to will worlds into being, and he is playing a game because "all existence for a man turned away from the eternal is but a vast mime under the mask of the absurd. Creation is the great mime."³ He does not therefore attempt to stop time; he does not conduct his life as if he were going to live forever but, on the contrary, he works with, rather than against, both time and destiny. Once we have realized this, Sartre's remark concerning Jean Genet's Our Lady of the Flowers becomes equally relevant to Othello:

It appears at first to have only one subject, Fatality: the characters are puppets of destiny. But we quickly discover that this pitiless Providence is really the counterpart of a sovereign--indeed divine--freedom, that of the author.⁴

Iago's existential freedom is an analogue of Shakespeare's artistic freedom.

Iago, consequently, changes as the situation changes, allowing it to mold him, and he comes to stand for freedom: the freedom of a destiny which imposes situations at will, the freedom which allows the creative artist to manipulate the objects of his creation, and the freedom of the absurd man who is aware of his limitations and who works within them. Iago is convinced that nothing in the world has meaning. Love is "merely a lust of the blood, and a permission of the will" (1, 3, 335-336). Virtue is a hollow concept. Honourable service to a master is nothing more than "obsequious bondage" (1, 1, 46). Reputation is "an idle and most false imposition" (2, 3, 260-261). Nothing is important to Iago, and his attitude is, in some respects, similar to that of Albert Camus when the latter writes: "They all created duties for themselves, and today children play leapfrog on the tombs that seek to perpetuate their virtue."⁵ Time is the great enemy, for death renders everything meaningless, and Iago is fully aware of the presence of death. Consequently, if all forms of human activity are merely games to which we add a spurious dignity by buttressing them with illusions of value, if death negates all, if hope is not valid, and if there is no future, then there can be only one thing of value--the most intense possible experience of the present moment. Life in an absurd universe means nothing but "indifference to the future and a desire to use up everything that

is given."⁶ Such a life would combine a fully conscious awareness of the absurdity of the universe together with the excitement which is to be derived from an exercise of the will. "The absurd joy par excellence is creation"⁷ and this is Iago's mode of existence for he exists only when he creates, only when he is manipulating others by exerting his will over them and thereby bringing new situations into being. Othello, when he learned of Desdemona's infidelity, experienced an encounter with nothingness. Desdemona's negativity sufficed to translate him into a negative, thereby shattering the image without which he was unable to live, and the re-attainment of which involved his own death. Iago has experienced an encounter with nothingness which has left him with an awareness of the absurdity of the universe, but he, unlike Othello, has not succumbed to it. He has, on the contrary, overcome it through the resolve to 'plume up his will.' His life therefore takes on the form of a continuous and exciting assertion of his will. Iago shares the joy of the persona of Marvell's To his Coy Mistress, and seems to say, but to himself:

Now let us sport us while we may;
 And now, like am'rous birds of prey,
 Rather at once our Time devour,
 Than languish in his slow-chapt pow'r.
 Let us roll all our Strength, and all
 Our sweetness, up into one Ball:
 And tear our Pleasures with rough strife,
 Through the Iron gates of Life.
 Thus, though we cannot make our Sun
 Stand still, yet we will make him run.

Iago will not attempt the impossible, he will not try to stop the passage of time in order to perpetuate an unrealistic pattern of behaviour.

He will not, like Othello, become:

A fixed figure, for the time of scorn
To point his slow unmoving fingers at.
(4, 2, 55-56)

He will rather urge time on and eagerly adopt new roles as the opportunities present themselves. Like Don Juan, what Iago "realizes in action is an ethic of quantity" because "belief in the absurd is tantamount to substituting the quantity of experiences for the quality. . . . What counts is not the best living but the most."⁸ He will live, therefore, not one but a whole series of lives, and he will live them at a high level of intensity. Like Genet when he steals, Iago when he asserts his will experiences a "gathering of self" which makes of him "a very ball of presence"⁹ because "creating is living doubly."¹⁰ Iago's, therefore, is a nontemporal vision of things. Life for him is a perpetual present, a series of momentous instants. "Pleasure, and action, make the hours seem short" (2, 3, 369) he says, and it is a remark which may profitably be compared to those made by Beckett's protagonists:¹¹

Vladimir: That passed the time.

Estragon: It would have passed in any case.

Vladimir: Yes, but not so rapidly.

Vladimir and Estragon are victims of an anguish which derives from

their sense of the slow murderous passage of time. They, however, have no one upon whom they can act--nothing against which they can assert themselves. Iago has, and he is thereby enabled to transcend the anguish wrought by time by using time. It is as if he says to himself: "Deprived of the eternal, I want to ally myself with time."¹²

The main themes of the play begin at this point to converge.

Othello is the bound man for in refusing the present he becomes servant to both time and illusion. Iago, on the other hand, is able to become his 'master's master' because he is free and this freedom manifests itself as creation under the aspects of destiny and the artistic process. Othello is a slave because he serves the illusion that there is a reality other than the subjective. "Honest, honest, Iago" (5, 2, 155) says Othello, and the real irony of the statement lies in the fact that Iago is honest; he is the only figure in the play who is free from illusion and the only one who is not victim to "that stubborn aberration in man's heart according , to which human beings were created to serve or be served."¹³ He is the authentic man for he faces up to reality, he accepts finitude and death, and rather than seeking refuge in the past he assumes full responsibility for his behaviour. In the last act of the play, Othello's histrionics are a lamentable comment when contrasted with Iago's quiet and resolute accept-

ance of the situation. In Iago there is no begging for mercy, no whining, no evasion of reality by taking refuge in flights of the imagination. There is, rather, a simple and impressive acceptance. The game--a game in which man is always the loser--has ended as he has always known it would. Destiny, in its turn, has become the victim of destiny. It is a supreme irony and one which points directly at the absurdity which characterizes the Othello universe.

Othello is bound and Iago is free; Othello is servant and Iago is master, both of himself and of the situation. Fortunately for us, the play is not quite so simple. Iago is an amorphous figure who escapes definition. He escapes definition because, ultimately, nothing can be asserted either about him or, for that matter, about the play. This is so for any assertion, if carried far enough, must lead to an awareness of the validity of its opposite because the whole play is structured in terms of opposites. This quality of opposition is in large part responsible for the absurdity of the vision which is embodied in the play and consequently, just as an absurd universe offers us truths but no truth, so also does the play Othello. Iago, therefore, both is and is not evil; he is both villain and hero, lewd and pure, involved and detached. It is, as he says, that he is not what he is. Consequently, although he is free in the sense which I have described, he is not wholly free. One cannot overlook his bitterness at the loss

of promotion, his sexual jealousy, and his desire for revenge. Neither can we overlook the fact that Iago does attempt, before Emilia has disclosed all, to evade his share of responsibility for the catastrophe. Iago does experience joy, and he does generate joy within the audience, but he also suffers, and, as we have seen, he becomes in his turn a victim. He is as much a victim of Othello as Othello is his victim. Iago is the alienated man, the fool who is estranged from normal society because of his awareness. This awareness ought to give rise to a disinterestedness and objectivity comparable to the emotional detachment of the artist. In Iago it both does and does not. "Strangle her in her bed" (4, 1, 203) he says of a Desdemona whom he has no reason either to hate or to love; but in complete contrast to this we have the anguish of:

For that I do suspect the lustful Moor
Hath leap'd into my seat, the thought whereof
Doth like a poisonous mineral gnaw my inwards.
(2, 1, 290-292)

Iago therefore becomes a statement about the nature of both art and life. Detachment ought to follow upon awareness but it does not. Othello falls victim to a human condition which he does not understand. Iago, although he understands the human condition, also falls victim to it. There is no escape. The play therefore is as much Iago's tragedy as it is Othello's; it is, in other words, also a tragedy of the little man.

Iago initially wishes only for three things: promotion, revenge, and to 'plume up his will.' He unfortunately underestimates Othello. The violence of Othello's reaction and his constant and unceasing demands upon Iago for more evidence--an obsession which even goes so far as to demand 'ocular proof'--frighten Iago and push him further and further into danger. He is finally, in desperation, led to utilize the handkerchief; an action which leads directly to the wholesale slaughter of the last act and to his own death.

The play may clearly be seen, at this point, to offer us a vision of a world in which everything becomes meaningless and where frustration reigns supreme. Othello desires to be impressive and only succeeds in behaving like a fool. He strives to uphold what he feels is a positive moral order and only succeeds in bringing about the destruction of everything he values. Desdemona wishes only to do what is right. She asserts the supremacy of love in following Othello, only to be condemned as lewd and deceitful. She strives for a reconciliation between husband and friend, and the more she strives the more she appears to be that which she is not. The desire of both Cassio and Emilia to serve that which they love is frustrated. Iago wants only to acquire that which he feels is owing to him by his lascivious, blustering, and pompous general. All are frustrated in their desires.

If absurdity arises from the interaction between man and the

universe when desire is confronted by reality,¹⁴ then Othello may rightly be said to offer us a vision of an absurd universe. It is a universe in which there are neither heroes nor villains, but only victims.

CHAPTER IV

THE FARCICAL ELEMENT IN OTHELLO

Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me,
For making him egregiously an ass.

We have now reached a point at which we may begin to draw conclusions from the discoveries made in the foregoing chapters. In the last chapter we saw how the structural principle of opposition worked to determine Iago's content in that he was revealed to us as being both bound and free. Othello does not have that kind of complexity. He is quite simply and throughout the slave. The precise nature of his limitation as a victim of a double-valued orientation was explored and he emerged as a rather simple-minded figure who allowed himself to be gulled outrageously by Iago. However, in that he is just as much a manifestation of the core as Iago is, there ought to be some evidence of opposition somewhere within his function. In terms of his thematic function we saw earlier that he served as a vehicle for the opposed themes of love and duty, but these derive from only one half of the core--the half which has to do with the idea of service. This is why he is not so full or complex a figure as the Iago in whom we see both service and freedom at work. However, there is one part of Othello's

function in which opposition may be found and this consists of the emotions which he generates in the audience. Besides generating the anguish and pain with which we, as spectators of the traditional type of Othello production are so familiar, Othello also functions to evoke laughter in the audience. This comic function upsets the traditional view of the play for the connotations of the term 'tragic hero' are not at all compatible with the laughter which must arise when we are confronted by the spectacle of the master being made a fool of by his servant. In an ideal production of Othello, we, the audience, would laugh with Iago at Othello. It is because of this that I have described the play as a tragic farce. There is a great deal of the farcical in Othello which has been obscured, for reasons which I shall touch on later, and it is this farcical element which I wish to discuss in this chapter. We may begin with a brief look at Iago.

Iago functions to generate joy in the audience because of the brilliant way in which he serves as a vehicle for the creative impulse. We are enthralled and fascinated by his constantly exercised ability to mold the situation to his will. Up to this point we have largely been concerned with analysing the nature of this ability in isolation from the objects against which it is directed. Once, however, we begin to take into account the kind of situation in which we find Iago exercising his ability, we should perceive how rich in comic potential it is, for Iago

is the little man who is in rebellion against an unjust master. One of the reasons why Iago is a far more complex figure than Othello is because Iago is cast in the role of the underdog who has fallen into the hands of a caricature--into the hands of a blustering, pompous, and egotistical master. This view of Iago as underdog receives reinforcement once we discover how closely Iago is modelled along the lines of the original clown, Harlequin. Iago, like Harlequin;

rushes about and seems to transform himself into different shapes. The laws of space and time do not seem to apply to him. He changes his guises in a flash. . . . He is a demon of movement. . . . Harlequin is a prestidigitator. He is a servant who does not really serve anybody. . . . He is wiser than his masters, although he seems only to be more clever. He is independent, because he has realized that the world is simply folly.¹

Consequently, Iago's characteristic movement on stage should be one which describes a circle about an Othello who moves constantly from side to side as he oscillates between absolutes. Othello is the cat which is being played with by the mouse, or, better still, he is the ping-pong ball which is being propelled from one end of the table to the other by an Iago who moves so rapidly that he is able to be not merely one but both players. An example of this kind of movement is to be found in the lines:

Oth. I do not think but Desdemona's honest.

Iago. Long live she so, and long live you to think so!

Oth. And yet how nature erring from itself--

Iago. Ay, there's the point.

(3, 3, 229-232)

We also need an Iago on stage who takes us into his confidence. This should be relatively easy to accomplish for not only are we and Iago little men, we are also Europeans. Iago's mask of seeming honesty should relax momentarily whenever he turns from Othello and looks at us. He should make it his habit to look directly at us, and often, for it is this look which will establish the bond out of which laughter will arise. Iago is a rich source of joy and comedy, for he represents an assertion of freedom, and it is "in laughter [that] man's freedom becomes manifest."²

If Iago generates laughter, so also should Othello. The play, although it has been recognized before as farcical,³ has never been produced as such, partly because it would seem that we prefer our own ideas to those of Shakespeare. The eighteenth century lopped off the ending of King Lear and substituted a happy ending which was more in accord with the taste of the day. We have not mutilated Othello, but in playing it as a pure tragedy we have distorted it. The idea of tragedy is gratifying to us because it exalts man, making of him a dignified and noble creature. But there is nothing either dignified or noble about Othello's simple-mindedness, his sexual jealousy,

and his brutality. The idea of tragedy, also, is comforting, for it posits the existence of something transcendent--of destiny, fate, or the gods.⁴ But, as we shall see in greater detail later, there is nothing transcendent in the Othello universe for it is a universe the essence of which is absurdity. Hence the difficulty involved in any production of Othello. Hence the fact that as great an actor as Sir Laurence Olivier should hesitate for years before attempting the enormously difficult role of Othello. Hence the dislike felt towards this play by many people who admire Shakespeare's other works. The play is difficult to produce; the role of Othello is an impossible role; and the play is a painful experience, because it was never intended to be played as a pure tragedy. It is rather, as I have said, a tragic farce. Othello, then, is not the dignified hero of the pure tragedy. He is a simple-minded, pompous, and egotistical soldier. The first of these characteristics requires no further demonstration for a whole chapter has already been devoted to delineating the nature of his simplicity--to demonstrating the fact that he is a victim of a double-valued orientation. The second characteristic, that of pomposity, is evident in the pure humbug of many of his speeches, as for instance in the speech which he addresses to the council:

Your voices, Lords: beseech you, let her will
 Have a free way; I therefore beg it not
 To please the palate of my appetite,
 Nor to comply with heat, the young affects
 In my defunct, and proper satisfaction,
 But to be free and bounteous of her mind;
 And heaven defend your good souls that you think
 I will your serious and great business scant,
 For she is with me;. . .no, when light-wing'd toys,
And feather'd Cupid, foils with wanton dullness
My speculative and active instruments,
 That my disports corrupt and taint my business,
 Let housewives make a skillet of my helm,
 And all indign and base adversities
 Make head against my reputation!

(1, 3, 260-274)

The words "the young affects/In my defunct, and proper satisfaction" have never been adequately explained, possibly because there is no explanation. Othello should experience difficulties at this part of his speech, for what he is uttering sounds suspiciously like nonsense; it sounds like an unsuccessful attempt to disguise his true reasons for wanting Desdemona in Cyprus. In order to establish the third point--that Othello is egotistical--we need only invoke the concept of figure and ground. Othello always sees himself at the centre of things. He always sees himself clearly outlined in the foreground as an imposing presence. This is so for he is playing a role; he is playing at being the great general. Because the situation is domestic and not military, Othello must of necessity enter into his own imagination if he is to sustain this imposture. He must negate reality for the sake of his self-image. Consequently, he is always figure and he reduces

the rest of the world to ground. When he recounts to the council the tale of his wooing of Desdemona, he occupies the centre of the word-picture which he paints for his listeners. He is the great and intrepid adventurer--the hero of daring escapades--the traveller who has seen marvels. Desdemona is reduced to the level of an awe-inspired beholder. She is, for Othello, not a person, but merely a good audience, and the nature of the love which he professes for her is, at best, dubious:

She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd,
And I lov'd her that she did pity them.
(1, 3, 167-168)

Even during the most horrifying moments of the play, when Desdemona is lying murdered on her bed, Othello persists in relegating everything to a background against which he can act out his own magnificence:

Whip me, you devils,
From the possession of this heavenly sight,
Blow me about in winds, roast me in sulphur,
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!
(5, 2, 278-281)

And then, of course, there is the famous last speech in which his evasion of reality and withdrawal into a world of the imagination is once again evident. This sort of behaviour is, at the latter end of the play, pathetic. But as it is characteristic of Othello to act in this fashion throughout the whole play, it offers, in the earlier part, excellent

material for comedy.

Besides these qualities of simple-mindedness, pomposity, and egotism, Othello also represents the stock comic figures of both gulled master and jealous husband. The comic potentialities of Othello in his role as the gulled master became evident when we saw that his servant, Iago, was a Harlequin figure. Similarly, Othello, in his role as jealous husband, offers obvious comic possibilities and invites comparison with Leontes of The Winter's Tale, or Bassanes of Ford's The Broken Heart. The richness of the comedy is enhanced by the suggestion that there is an element of hypocrisy in Othello's makeup. Such a suspicion arises when we begin to notice that there are a number of things in the play which suggest that Othello is by nature lascivious. In connection with this we may note the implications of Othello's eagerness, in the council scene speech quoted above, to allay the non-existent suspicion that he may only want Desdemona in Cyprus for sexual reasons. There is also Iago's suspicion that Othello has seduced Emilia; a suspicion voiced several times during the play and one so great that it has led to his broaching the subject to Emilia directly. Finally, of course, there are all the implications of the extreme violence of Othello's jealousy.

We are left with the image of a man who is playing at being a soldier when he should be paying attention to more important things;

of a man who is so engrossed with his own self-image that he feels others must inevitably love him as much as he himself does; and of a simple-minded master who allows himself to become the plaything of a servant. In order to enjoy the comic potential of this situation we must cultivate detachment. Sartre, in speaking of Brecht, has said that:

Brecht felt that the distance between actors and audience was not great enough, that one tried too much to move the audience, to touch them, and not enough to show them; in other words, too many participational relationships, too many images, not enough objectivity. In my opinion the bourgeois public is foolish not because it participates, but because it participates in an image which is the image of a fool.⁵

The error consists in allowing a participational relationship to spring up between ourselves and Othello. To refuse this identification is to refuse to limit our perception of the whole--it is to take a step towards the kind of awareness enjoyed by the artist himself. "Put out the light, and then put out the light" (5, 2, 7), says Othello. It is pathetic and it is ludicrous but it is not sublime. It is pathetic because it comes from a man who has been 'putting out the light' all along. Throughout the entire play Othello has searched frantically for proof while remaining utterly impervious to awareness. It is ludicrous because, coming from an Othello who has spent the play blinding himself to reality and striving frenziedly to sustain an illusion, it makes about as much sense as to say "Put out the cat, and then put out the cat." The stage

should offer us the spectacle of a flamboyantly dressed black Othello. He should be depicted as an uncomprehending alien with large 'rolling eyes,' eyes which never look out upon the audience but which are constantly directed inward upon himself. He should also be represented as physically powerful, this power serving as an ironic contrast to his practical impotence. Against this huge, slow-moving, and ponderous alien, a slightly-built and nimble Iago should exercise his wits and energy.

There is much that is farcical in Othello, but there is also much that is tragic. I suggested earlier that the farcical element is obscured in modern productions of the play and gave as my reason the fact that tragedy is both gratifying and comforting. But there is another reason besides this one to account for the failure to recognize the existence of a farcical element, and it derives from the fact that the modern audience is a highly literate one. For the modern audience, Shakespeare means literature and not theatre. Othello, like Lear, when "regarded as a person, a character. . . is ridiculous, naive and stupid."⁶ But "the hero of a play not only propels an action on, he not only suffers a certain fate. . . he also represents a world"⁷ and it is this 'world' which, for a modern audience, far outweighs the 'action' in importance. This is so for the 'world' represents the significance of the play whereas the 'action' is the theatrical

spectacle. Othello, when he learned during the temptation scene of Desdemona's supposed infidelity, experienced an encounter with nothingness. Upon the stage the spectacle of the actual encounter should be farcical. It is only when we begin to realize the implications of the encounter--that it is indeed an encounter with nothingness--that the action attains to tragic significance. In Othello the action or spectacle should be farcical--it is the symbolic content of this farcical theatrical spectacle which is of tragic significance. Consequently, although the play is not pure tragedy, it is nevertheless tragic. The tragic arises out of and is reinforced by the comic.

I have stated several times that only if we distance ourselves from the play will we be able to perceive the farcical element. We should cease to identify with Othello "in order to avoid the ridiculousness of easy tears, of sentimentality,"⁸ and in order to be able to enjoy the comedy. But there are even more important reasons for cultivating objectivity than these, for once we have achieved an objective or aesthetic response we will be able to "underline by farce the tragic sense of the play, [for] light makes shadows deeper, shade accentuates light."⁹ To emphasize the tragic content of the play is, paradoxically, to debilitate the tragic sense of the play. In playing Othello as a pure tragedy we have forgotten that one of Shakespeare's most important devices is to establish a tension be-

tween opposites in which both elements mutually reinforce one another.

Our task then is to distance ourselves from the play; it is to aspire to the condition of detachment and awareness of Shakespeare himself. Once having achieved this the play ceases to be a painful experience for us. As a theatrical spectacle it becomes, instead, largely comic. But there is a greater gain than this for in responding aesthetically we are in a position to begin to understand the real significance of the play.

CHAPTER V

AN ABSURD UNIVERSE

There's no remedy. . .

Othello describes a collision between opposites--between, if we were to use the terminology of Wyndham Lewis, a simpleton and a knave--and the result is a comic spectacle because both Othello and Iago are extremes of their type; they are, in fact, monstrous exaggerations. Earlier, I described Othello as a caricature, and there are many references to things monstrous in the play. The most striking of these references occurs in the soliloquy which Iago utters on the eve of the execution of his plan:

I ha't, it is engender'd; Hell and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.
(1, 3, 401-402)

The action from this point onwards does indeed erupt into a 'monstrous birth;' so much so that one must conclude that the spectacle which ensues is grotesque. Jan Kott's definition of the grotesque as "a swindle in which the swindled is more just than the swindler, and the swindler wiser than the swindled"¹ should suffice to point us to the comic aspect of this spectacle. Out of this comic spectacle, how-

ever, something far more sinister arises for:

The grotesque is only a way of expressing in a tangible manner, of making us perceive physically the paradoxical, the form of the unformed, the face of a world without face.²

Because there is this other, and more sinister side to the grotesque, and because the Elizabethan stage was not only a physical but was also a metaphysical setting for man's life, we must therefore go on to explore the significance of the spectacle which takes place upon the stage.

The central action of the play occurs during the temptation scene when Othello learns of Desdemona's supposed infidelity. He is, at this moment, "plunged into a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights."³ His self-image is shattered, the wonderful background against which he could act out his role disintegrates, and he bursts out into his anguished:

O now for ever
Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content;
Farewell the plumed troop, and the big wars. . .
And, O ye mortal engines, whose wide throats
The immortal Jove's great clamour counterfeit;
Farewell, Othello's occupation's gone!
(3, 3, 353-355, 361-363)

Othello, here, experiences an encounter with nothingness, and this "divorce between man and his life, the actor and his role, is properly the feeling of absurdity."⁴ An abyss has suddenly opened up before

him, he has been confronted with the meaninglessness of things, and the feeling which this awareness gives rise to proves intolerable to him. "The grotesque is the estranged world,"⁵ and Othello cannot accept this feeling of estrangement or alienation. From this anguish of being he characteristically retreats into the illusory world of his imagination, refusing the awareness which has been thrust upon him, and choosing instead the spurious greatness of his self-image. But Othello is not the only one to undergo such an encounter; nor, incidentally, is he alone in seeking refuge from it in illusion. "Laughter originates on the comic and caricatural fringe of the grotesque"⁶ but when this grotesquely comic facade is rent in two, we, like Othello, become unable to orient ourselves in this world. We also experience an encounter with nothingness when we recognize the real nature of the Othello universe--when we begin to see that it is indeed absurd and meaningless--for in the "tragi-grotesque. . . the absolute has ceased to exist. It has been replaced by the absurdity of the human situation."⁷

The world of Othello is absurd, in the first place, because there is no such thing as destiny or fate or the gods operating within it. I stated earlier that Othello was similar to Hamlet and Macbeth in that in all three plays the force which imposes the tragic situation was objectified in some external entity other than the hero himself: in Hamlet it

is the ghost; in Macbeth, the witches; and in Othello it is of course Iago. However, Othello may also be compared with King Lear in that in both of these plays the figure which contains the idea of destiny is a human being. There seems to be a progression here from the view that destiny or fate is some sort of supernatural or transcendent thing, to the view that there is no such thing at all--to the view that it is man who imposes his own fate upon himself. This would seem to be the meaning of Desdemona's last words, and the two views are both represented in Othello. Othello, at the end of the temptation scene, concludes of what has happened that:

'Tis destiny, unshunnable, like death:
Even then this forked plague is fated to us,
When we do quicken.

(3, 3, 279-281)

Iago, in opposition to this, exclaims at the opening of the play:

Virtue? a fig! 'tis in ourselves, that we are thus,
or thus: our bodies are gardens, to the which our wills
are gardeners.

(1, 3, 319-321)

Because there is no evidence at all that any non-human agency is at work in this play, and because Iago embodies more fully than Othello the absurd quality which characterizes the play, we must inevitably see that there is no such thing as destiny in the Othello universe.

There is only the human will, and Iago is an embodiment of will.

There is, in short, "no non-human situation."⁸ All situations come

into being through the agency of man's own will and because of this, just as there can be no such thing as destiny, neither can there be any such thing as complete freedom.

We saw earlier that Iago's characteristic movement should be one which describes a circle about an Othello who moves from side to side as he oscillates between absolutes. Similarly, in the final scene of the play when Iago is exposed, Emilia should begin to circumscribe a circle about an Iago who remains immobile and rooted to the spot, and Iago who is incredulous at what is taking place, until he lunges at Emilia with his sword in an attempt to break out of the circle. But what we should note here is that there is no escape from this circle, for the circle is situation, and situation is 'there-ness.' We exist because we are there. Being is situation and one cannot escape from oneself. Situation is a project of being which can only be escaped from by a movement into non-being. Iago here experiences his encounter with nothingness. Up to this point he has behaved as if his awareness of the mechanism whereby meaning is imposed upon reality has endowed him with a freedom from the contingencies of existence. It is here, for the first time, that he seems to learn that freedom is an empty concept--that it has as much meaning as anything else--which is to say that it has none. Freedom is meaningless for it consists merely of 'the conscious recognition of

necessity."⁹ In other words, awareness of limit does not enable one to transcend limit. Only by transcending limit can one be said to be truly free and this is clearly impossible. Man exists because he acts and action consists in an exercise of the will whereby situation is brought into being. There is no escape, for even to choose not to will involves an exercise of the will. Consequently, one may choose like Iago to extend the range of one's will by imposing situations on others, or to limit one's will like Othello and allow others to impose situations upon oneself. One may choose to contain others or to be contained by them. But in both cases one remains within a circle, whether it be one's own or that of another. Initially, Emilia is contained within the circle established by Iago. His error is to underestimate her potential for creating meanings and imposing situations. Emilia, in her desire to protect the name of her dead mistress, chooses to place a higher value upon her love for Desdemona than upon her duty to Iago. In doing so she imposes a situation in which Iago moves from container to contained, and from which there is, of course, no escape. The world which Emilia has willed into being swallows up the Iago world.

What, then, is the nature of these 'worlds' or 'situations'? One thing which is evident is that each individual figure in the Othello universe lives within a world of his or her own making. Othello's

world, as we have seen, bears no relationship to the actuality of his situation; the image which Othello has of himself exists only within his own head. The images which the other figures in the play have of both Othello and Iago are similarly illusory. Iago's image of Emilia also turns out to be unreal. All of these figures are convinced that they have a grip upon reality but the reality which they believe in exists only for each one of them individually. In other words, just as man is the foundation of all values, he is also the shaper of reality, but in the process of shaping this reality it becomes distorted. Man wills the world, and there is consequently not one but as many worlds as there are individual wills. In that these worlds do bear some sort of relationship to one another, we cannot deny the existence of an objective reality in the Othello universe, but it can be asserted of this reality that there is no possibility of grasping it, of knowing it for what it is in itself. Here, then, is another reason for describing the Othello universe as absurd. It is absurd because in it "all true knowledge is impossible, solely appearances can be enumerated."¹⁰ The impossibility of being able to assert anything final about this world holds true both for those within it and, in a sense, for those outside of it; for the figures which populate it and for ourselves, the audience. This is so for the grotesque is "the most obvious and pronounced contra-

diction of any kind of rationalism and any systematic use of thought." The grotesque, in other words, is "a play with the absurd."¹¹

In defining the Othello universe we must define it negatively as being one in which there are no absolutes, in which objective reality exists but is unknowable, and in which neither freedom nor escape is possible for within it there is no non-human situation. Only one thing is clear: it is a universe characterized by will. It is, in fact, quite like the world which Schopenhauer described in his statement: "Will is the thing-in-itself, the inner content, the essence of the world. . . . The visible world. . . is only the mirror of the will."¹² Consequently, it is not fate but is instead man who imposes situations upon himself through the agency of his will. But this will is in itself limiting and destructive for the situation becomes a trap which man has set himself and into which he falls.¹³ All action therefore becomes futile. Wyndham Lewis has suggested that all of Shakespeare's work "can be regarded as a criticism of action"¹⁴ but I would prefer to say that, at least as far as Othello is concerned, Shakespeare was not so much concerned to criticize action as to describe its futility. The play demonstrates quite clearly that we cannot make things happen--that, as Camus says, we must accept frustration as a natural state. Pure tragedy is a cloak which hides the absurd. Othello is not pure tragedy. It emphasizes the grotesque which, far from being

concerned with individual actions or the destruction of the moral order. . . is primarily the expression of our failure to orient ourselves in the physical universe. . . . It presupposes that the categories which apply to our world view become inapplicable.¹⁵

Othello describes a collision between opposites and the basic opposition is that between Othello as traditional or medieval man and Iago as the new man of the Renaissance; between an ethic of quality and an ethic of quantity; between service and freedom; between appearance and reality. The play exhibits a conflict between two world views and two kinds of theatre and ultimately it becomes inexplicable because the antagonism between tragedy and farce is irreconcilable.¹⁶ The play, then, rather than being a clear-cut mechanical thing, is like the universe itself; it is dynamic because the tragic and the farcical do not mix completely with each other, they co-exist, they repulse one another constantly, each setting the other into relief; they criticize each other, mutually deny each other, constituting through this opposition a dynamic balance, a tension.¹⁷

This tension may perhaps be seen as analogous to the absurdity which Camus describes as arising when man's appetite for unity and for the absolute is confronted by the silence of the universe. Othello is a universe, and Iago, who is its fullest representative, offers the same answer which the universe itself offers to those who ask for an explanation:

Demand me nothing, what you know, you know,
From this time forth I never will speak word.
(5, 2, 304-305).

APPENDIX

A List of Paired Opposites for Othello and Iago

Othello, Act I:

My services, which I have done the signiory,
Shall out-tongue his complaints.
(2, 19-20)

I would not my unhoused free condition
Put into circumscription and confine.
For the sea's worth.
(2, 26-28)

Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust 'em;
Good signior, you shall more command with years
Than with your weapons.
(2, 59-61)

Hold your hands,
Both you of my inclining and the rest.
(2, 81-82)

Rude am I in my speech,
And little blest with the set phrase of peace.
(3, 81-82)

The tyrant custom, most grave senators,
Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war
My thrice-driven bed of down.
(3, 229-231)

I therefore beg it not
To please the palate of my appetite. . .
But to be free and bounteous of her mind.
(3, 261-262, 265)

No, when light-wing'd toys,
And feather'd Cupid, foils with wanton dullness
My speculative and active instruments,
That my disports corrupt and taint my business,
Let housewives make a skillet of my helm.

(3, 268-272)

Othello, Act II:

If after every tempest come such calmness,
May the winds blow, till they have waken'd death,
And let the labouring bark climb hills of seas,
Olympus-high, and duck again as low
As hell's from heaven.
(1, 185-189)

It stops me here, it is too much of joy:
And this, and this, the greatest discord be
That e'er our hearts shall make!
(1, 197-199)

For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl.
(3, 163)

The gravity and stillness of your youth. . .
And spend your rich opinion, for the name
Of a night-brawler?
 (3, 182, 186-187)

Now by heaven
My blood begins my safer guides to rule,
And passion having my best judgement collid
Assays to lead the way. Zounds, if I stir,
Or do but lift this arm, the best of you
Shall sink in my rebuke. . .

:what, in a town of war,
Yet wild, the people's hearts brim full of fear,
To manage private and domestic quarrels.

(3, 195-200, 204-206)

Come, Desdemona: 'tis the soldiers' life,
To have their balmy slumbers wak'd with strife.
(3, 249-250)

Othello, Act III:

Excellent wretch, perdition catch my soul,
But I do love thee, and when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again.

(3, 91-93)

For such things in a false disloyal knave
Are tricks of custom; but in a man that's just,
They are close denotements, working from the heart,
That passion cannot rule.

(3, 125-128)

I prithee, speak to me as to thy thinkings,
As thou dost ruminate, and give the worst of thought
The worst of word.

(3, 135-137)

: yet 'tis the plague of great ones,
Prerogativ'd are they less than the base.

(3, 277-278)

Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore.

(3, 365)

Do deeds to make heaven weep, all earth amaz'd.

(3, 377)

By the world,
I think my wife be honest, and think she is not,
I think that thou art just, and think thou art not;
I'll have some proof: my name, that was as fresh
As Dian's visage, is now begrin'd, and black
As mine own face.

(3, 389-394)

All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven, . . .
'Tis gone.

Arise, black vengeance, from thy hollow cell,
Yield up, O love, thy crown, and hearted throne,
To tyrannous hate.

(3, 452-456)

Never, Iago. Like to the Pontic Sea,
 Whose icy current, and compulsive course,
 Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on
 To the Propontic, and the Hellespont:
 Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace
 Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,
 Till that a capable and wide revenge
 Swallow them up.

(3, 460-467)

Not with vain thanks, but with acceptance bounteous.
 (3, 477)

A liberal hand; the hearts of old gave hands,
 But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts.
 (4, 42-43)

She told her, while she kept it
 'Twould make her amiable, and subdue my father
Entirely to her love; but if she lost it,
 Or made a gift of it, my father's eye
Should hold her loathly, and his spirits should hunt
After new fancies.
 (4, 56-61)

Othello, Act IV:

Naked abed, Iago, and not mean harm?
 It is hypocrisy against the devil:
 They that mean virtuously, and yet do so,
 The devil their virtue tempts, and they tempt heaven.
 (1, 5-8)

A horned man's a monster, and a beast.
 (1, 62)

Get me some poison, Iago, this night; I'll not
 expostulate with her, lest her body and beauty
 unprovide my mind a gain, this night, Iago.
 (1, 200-202)

I am glad to see you mad.
 (1, 234)

Come, swear it, damn thyself,
 Lest, being like one of heaven, the devils themselves
 Should fear to seize thee, therefore be double-damn'd,
 Swear thou art honest.

Des. Heaven doth truly know it.
 Oth. Heaven truly knows, that thou art false as hell.
 (2, 36-40)

But there, where I have garner'd up my heart,
 Where either I must live, or bear no life,
 The fountain, from the which my current runs,
 Or else dries up, to be discarded thence,
 Or keep it as a cistern, for foul toads
 To knot and gender in!
 (2, 58-63)

O thou black weed, why art so lovely fair?
 (2, 69)

What committed!
Heaven stops the nose at it, and the moon winks,
 The bawdy wind, that kisses all it meets,
 Is hush'd within the hollow mine of earth,
 And will not hear't.
 (2, 78-82)

You, mistress,
 That have the office opposite to Saint Peter,
 And keeps the gates in hell, ay, you, you, you!
 (2, 92-94)

Othello, Act V:

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,
 Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars:
 It is the cause, yet I'll not shed her blood,
 Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,
 And smooth, as monumental alabaster;
 Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.
 Put out the light, and then put out the light:
 If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
 I can again thy former light restore,
 Should I repent me; but once put out thine,

Thou cunning pattern of excelling nature,
 I know not where is that Promethean heat
 That can thy light relume: when I have pluck'd the rose,
 I cannot give it vital growth again,
 It must needs wither; I'll smell it on the tree,
 A balmy breath, that doth almost persuade
 Justice herself to break her sword: once more:
 Be thus, when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,
 And love thee after: once more, and this the last,
 So sweet was ne'er so fatal.

(2, 1-20)

O perjur'd woman, thou dost stone thy heart,
 And makest me call what I intend to do
 A murder, which I thought a sacrifice.

(2, 64-66)

I that am cruel, am yet merciful,
 I would not have thee linger in thy pain.

(2, 88-89)

I am not valiant neither,
 But every puny whipster gets my sword.

(2, 244-245)

I am not sorry neither, I'd have thee live,
 For in my sense 'tis happiness to die.

(2, 290-291)

An honourable murderer, if you will:
 For nought did I in hate, but all in honour.

(2, 295-296)

Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil
 Why he hath thus ensnar'd my soul and body?

(2, 302-303)

I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee, no way but this,
Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.

(2, 359-360)

Iago, Act I:

Despise me if I do not: three great ones of the city,
In personal suit to make me his lieutenant,
Oft capp'd [in the sense of 'humbly'] to him, and by
the faith of man,
I know my price, I am worth no worse a place.
But he, as loving his own pride and purposes, . . .
(1, 8-12)

Forsooth, a great arithmetician. . . .
That never set a squadron in the field. . . .
: mere prattle without practice
Is all his soldiership: b ut he, sir, had the election,
And I, of whom his eyes had seen the proof,
At Rhodes, at Cyprus, and on other grounds,
Christian and heathen, must be lee'd, and calm'd,
By debitor and creditor.
(1, 19, 22, 26-31)

But there's no remedy, 'tis the curse of service,
 Preferment goes by letter and affection,
 Not by the old gradation. . . .
 (1, 35-37)

You shall mark
Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave,
That, doting on his own obsequious bondage,
Wears out his time much like his master's ass,
For nought but provender, and when he's old, cashier'd,
Whip me such honest knaves: others there are,
Who, trimm'd in forms, and visages of duty,
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,
And throwing but shows of service on their lords,
Do well thrive by 'em, and when they have lin'd their coats,
Do themselves homage, those fellows have some soul,
And such a one do I profess myself.

(1, 44-55)

Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,
But seeming so, for my peculiar end.
For when my outward action does demonstrate
The native act and figure of my heart. . . .
(1, 59-62)

I am not what I am.
(1, 65)

Even now, very now, an old black ram
Is tugging your white ewe.
(1, 88-89)

Zounds, sir, you are one of those that will not serve
God, if the devil bid you. Because we are come to do
you service, you think we are ruffians, you'll have
your daughter cover'd with a Barbary horse; you'll
have your nephews neigh to you; you'll have coursers
for cousins, and gennets for germans.
(1, 108-113)

Though I do hate him, as I do hell's pains,
Yet, for necessity of present life,
I must show out a flag, and sign of love.
(1, 154-156)

Though in the trade of war I have slain men,
Yet do I hold it very stuff of conscience
To do no contriv'd murder.
(2, 1-3)

. . . since I could distinguish between
a benefit and an injury.
(3, 312-313)

Virtue? a fig!. . . our bodies are gardens, to the
which our wills are gardeners, so that if we will. . .
have it sterile with idleness, or manur'd with industry,
why, the power, and corrigible authority of this, lies
in our wills. If the balance of our lives had not one
scale of reason, to poise another of sensuality, the
blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to
most preposterous conclusions. But we have reason to
cool our raging motions, our carnal stings, our un-
bitted lusts.
(3, 319, 320-321, 324-332)

. . . it was a violent commencement, and thou shalt see an answerable sequestration. . . . The food that to him now is as luscious as locusts, shall be to him shortly as acerb as the coloquintida.

(3, 345-346, 349-350)

If sanctimony, and a frail vow, betwixt an erring barbarian and a super-subtle Venetian, be not too hard for my wits, and all the tribe of hell, thou shalt enjoy her; . . . therefore make money, . . . a pox o'drowning, 'tis clean out of the way: seek thou rather to be hang'd in compassing thy joy, than to be drown'd, and go without her.

(3, 355-362)

I ha't, it is engender'd; Hell and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.

(3, 401-402)

Iago, Act II:

Saints in your injuries; devils being offended;
Players in your housewifery; and housewives in your beds.

(1, 111-112)

You rise to play, and go to bed to work. .

(1, 115)

There's none so foul, and foolish thereunto,
But does foul pranks, which fair and wise ones do.

(1, 141-142)

To change the cod's head for the salmon's tail.

(1, 155)

: as little a web as this will ensare as great
a fly as Cassio.

(1, 168-169)

When the blood is made dull with the act of sport,
there should be again to inflame it, and give satiety
a fresh appetite, loveliness in favour.

(1, 225-228)

Cassio. . . a knave very voluble, no farther conscionable than in putting on the mere form of civil and humane seeming, for the better compassing of his salt and hidden affections.
(1, 236-240)

and do but see his vice,
'Tis to his virtue a just equinox.
(3, 116-117)

I do not know, friends all but now, even now,
In quarter, and in terms, like bride and groom,
Devesting them to bed, and then but now,
As if some planet had unwitted men,
Swords out, and tilting one at other's breast,
In opposition bloody. I cannot speak
Any beginning to this peevish odds;
And would in action glorious I had lost
These legs, that brought me to a part of it!
(3, 170-177)

: you are but now cast in his mood, a punishment more
in policy than in malice, even so, as one would beat his
offenceless dog, to affright ~~an~~ imperious lion.
(3, 264-268)

She holds it a vice in her goodness not to do more
than she is requested.
(3, 312-313)

And what's he then, that says I play the villain,
When this advice is free I give, and honest.
(3, 327-328)

How am I then a villain,
To counsel Cassio to this parallel course,
Directly to his good? Divinity of hell!
When devils will their blackest sins put on,
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
As I do now. (3, 339-344)

So will I turn her virtue into pitch.
(3, 351)

Thou knowest we work by wit, and not by witchcraft.
(3, 362)

Iago, Act III:

Good my lord, pardon me;
Though I am bound to every act of duty,
I am not bound to that all slaves are free to;
Utter my thoughts? Why, say they are vile and false:
As where's that palace, where into foul things
Sometimes intrude not? who has a breast so pure.
But some uncleanly apprehensions
Keep leets and law-days, and in session sit
With meditations lawful?
(3, 137-145)

Good name in man and woman's dear, my lord;
Is the immediate jewel of our souls:
Who steals my purse, steals trash, 'tis something, nothing,
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.
(3, 159-165)

Oth. That cuckold lives in bliss,
Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger:
But O, what damned minutes tells he o'er
Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves!
O misery!
Iago. Poor and content is rich, and rich enough,
But riches, fineless, is as poor as winter
To him that ever fears he shall be poor.
(3, 171-178)

Wear your eye thus, not jealous, nor secure.
(3, 202)

In Venice they do let God see the pranks
They dare not show their husbands: their best conscience
Is not to leave undone, but keep unknown.
(3, 206-208)

She did deceive her father, marrying you;
 And when she seem'd to shake and fear your looks,
 She lov'd them most.

(3, 210-212)

Her will, recoiling to her better judgement,
 May fall to match you with her country forms,
 And happily repent.

(3, 240-242)

I will in Cassio's lodging lose this napkin,
 And let him find it: trifles light as air
 Are to the jealous, confirmations strong
As proofs of holy writ.

(3, 326-329)

O grace, O heaven defend me!
 Are you a man, have you a soul or sense?
 God buy you, take mine office, - O wretched fool,
 That livest to make thine honesty a vice!
 O monstrous world, take note, take note, O world. . .
 I'll love no friend, since love breeds such offence.
 Oth. Nay, stay, thou shouldst be honest.
 Iago. I should be wise, for honesty's a fool,
 And loses that it works for.

(3, 379-383, 386-389)

Let him command,
 And to obey shall be in me remorse.

(3, 474-475)

My friend is dead:
 'Tis done as you request, but let her live.

(3, 480-481)

Iago, Act IV:

No, forbear,
 The lethargy must have his quiet course,
 If not, he foams at mouth, and by and by
 Breaks out to savage madness.

(1, 52-55)

O, 'tis the spite of hell, the fiend's arch-mock,
 To lip a wanton in a secure couch,
 And to suppose her chaste.
 (1, 70-72)

He, when he hears of her, cannot refrain
 From the excess of laughter: here he comes:
 As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad.
 (1, 98-100)

Yours, by this hand: and to see how he prizes the
 foolish woman your wife! she gave it him, and he
 hath given it his whore.
 (1, 171-173)

Iago, Act V:

It makes us or it mars us, think of that.
 (1, 4)

He has a daily beauty in his life,
 That makes me ugly.
 (1, 19-20)

What may you be, are you of good or evil?
 (1, 65)

This is the night
 That either makes me, or fordoes me quite.
 (1, 127-128)

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

¹Fergusson, Human Image, 116-117.

²Fergusson, Idea of a Theatre, 104.

³Ibid., 102.

⁴All quotations from Othello are taken from the edition of M. R. Ridley. Whenever an instance of verbal opposition occurs within such a quotation it will be italicized.

Chapter II

¹Wilson Knight, Wheel of Fire, 106-107.

²Hayakawa, Language in Thought and Action, 221-222.

³Prefaces to Shakespeare, IV, 301.

⁴Nash, "Paired Words in Othello," has detected in Othello's speech the habit of linking two adjectives together to qualify the same noun, as in "begrim'd and black." If he had widened his perspective somewhat he would have seen that these pairings, or at least those examples which he quotes in his essay, will often form one or other of the sides of a paired opposite. In the example just quoted, for instance, the paired adjectives form part of the negative component of the paired opposite:

My name, that was as fresh
As Dian's visage, is now begrim'd and black
As mine own face. (3, 3, 392-394)

Nevertheless, although Nash has noticed only a part of the total pattern, his conclusion is relevant to this thesis: "The frequency with which this figure occurs in these speeches, and at an important dramatic moment--a moment when Othello is shown in all the fullness of his soldierly integrity--is surely more than accidental." The key word here is "soldierly," for the pattern occurs most frequently when Othello is behaving as a soldier.

- ⁵Hayakawa, Language in Thought and Action, 232.
- ⁶Othello, footnote, 77.
- ⁷Leavis, The Common Pursuit, 142.
- ⁸Hayakawa, Language in Thought and Action, 233.
- ⁹Gardner, The Noble Moor, 362.
- ¹⁰"Machiavel and Moor," 357.
- ¹¹Hayakawa, Language in Thought and Action, 223.
- ¹²Ibid., 227-228.
- ¹³Prefaces to Shakespeare, IV, 298.
- ¹⁴Hayakawa, Language in Thought and Action, 152.

Chapter III

- ¹Eliot, "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," 130.
- ²"Existentialism is a Humanism," 308.
- ³Camus, Myth of Sisyphus, 70.
- ⁴Introduction, 1.
- ⁵Notebooks 1935-1942, 54.
- ⁶Camus, Myth of Sisyphus, 44.
- ⁷Ibid., 69.
- ⁸Ibid., 54, 45.
- ⁹Genet, Thief's Journal, 22-23.
- ¹⁰Camus, Myth of Sisyphus, 70.
- ¹¹Waiting for Godot, 31.

¹²Camus, Myth of Sisyphus, 64.

¹³Ibid., 63.

¹⁴Ibid., 16.

Chapter IV

¹Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, 132.

²Durrenmatt, "Problems of the Theatre," 38.

³The farcical nature of Othello has been recognized by Alexander Pope, who went on to incorporate a reference to Othello into the fifth canto of his The Rape of the Lock:

Not fierce Othello in so loud a Strain

Roar'd for the Handkerchief that Caus'd his Pain. (105-6)

Also noteworthy is T. S. Eliot's remark that he had never seen a cogent refutation of Thomas Rymer's essay of 1693, "Othello: A Bloody Farce."

⁴Ionesco, "Discovering the Theatre," 86: "For some people, the tragic may appear, in one way, comforting, for, if it expresses the impotence of vanquished man, broken by fatality for example, tragedy recognizes by that very fact the reality of a fatality, of a destiny, of laws ruling the universe." See also Wyndham Lewis, Lion and Fox, 23, who, using the mirror as a metaphor for Shakespeare's art, stated: "It could be shown that any mirror that was really a mirror, and which told the truth, would have been smashed long ago."

⁵"Beyond Bourgeois Theatre," 134.

⁶Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, 103.

⁷Durrenmatt, "Problems of the Theatre," 30.

⁸Ionesco, "Discovering the Theatre," 86.

⁹Ibid.

Chapter V

¹ Shakespeare Our Contemporary, 105-106.

² Durrenmatt, "Problems of the Theatre," 33.

³ Camus, Myth of Sisyphus, 5.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Kayser, The Grottesque, 184.

⁶ Ibid., 187.

⁷ Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, 109.

⁸ Sartre, Being and Nothingness, 554.

⁹ Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, 112.

¹⁰ Camus, Myth of Sisyphus, 9.

¹¹ Kayser, The Grottesque, 188, 187.

¹² Works of Schopenhauer, 163.

¹³ Cf., Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, 106: "In the world of the grotesque, downfall cannot be justified by, or blamed on, the absolute. The absolute is not endowed with any ultimate reasons; it is stronger, that is all. The absolute is absurd. Maybe that is why the grotesque often makes use of the concept of a mechanism which has been put in motion and cannot be stopped. Various kinds of impersonal and hostile mechanisms have taken the place of God, Nature and History, found in the old tragedy. . . . But this absurd mechanism is not transcendental any more in relation to man, or at any rate to mankind. It is a trap set by man himself into which he has fallen."

¹⁴ The Lion and The Fox, 160.

¹⁵ Kayser, The Grottesque, 185.

¹⁶ Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, 113.

¹⁷ Ionesco, "Discovering the Theatre," 86-87.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Journal Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|---|
| EIC | Essays in Criticism |
| ES | English Studies |
| JEGP | Journal of English and Germanic Philology |
| MP | Modern Philology |
| N & Q | Notes and Queries |
| PMLA | Publications of The Modern Language Association |
| PQ | Philological Quarterly |
| RES | Review of English Studies |
| ShS | Shakespeare Survey |
| SJ | Shakespeare-Jahrbuch |
| SP | Studies in Philology |
| SQ | Shakespeare Quarterly |
| SR | Sewanee Review |
| TSE | Tulane Studies in English |
| UKCR | University of Kansas City Review |
| UTQ | University of Toronto Quarterly |
| VQR | Virginia Quarterly Review |

PRIMARY SOURCES

- Beckett, Samuel. Waiting for Godot. New York: Grove Press, 1954.
- Camus, Albert. The Myth of Sisyphus. Translated by Justin O'Brien. New York: Vintage Books, 1955. (Originally published 1942.)
- . Notebooks 1935-1942. Translated by Philip Thody. New York: Modern Library, 1965.
- Ford, John. The Broken Heart. Edited by Brian Morris. London: Ernest Benn, 1965.
- Genet, Jean. Our Lady of the Flowers. Introduction by Jean-Paul Sartre. Translated by Bernard Frechtman. New York: Bantam, 1964. (Originally published 1943.)
- . The Thief's Journal. Translated by Bernard Frechtman. New York: Bantam, 1965. (Originally published 1949.)
- Marvell, Andrew. The Poems of Andrew Marvell. Edited by Hugh Macdonald. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952.
- Pope, Alexander. The Poems of Alexander Pope. Edited by John Butt. London: Methuen, 1963.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology. Translated by Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Philosophical Library, 1956.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. The Works of Schopenhauer. Edited by Will Durant. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1928.
- Shakespeare, William. The Works of William Shakespeare. Edited by William George Clark and William Aldis Wright. London: Macmillan, 1911.
- . Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories & Tragedies. A Facsimile edition prepared by Helge Kökeritz. With an Introduction by Charles Tyler Prouty. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954.

Shakespeare, William. Othello. Edited by Horace Howard Furness. [New Variorum Reprint of 1886]. New York: Dover, 1963.

------. Othello. Edited by George Lyman Kittredge. Boston: Ginn, 1941.

------. Othello. Edited by Alice Walker and John Dover Wilson. Cambridge: University Press, 1957.

------. Othello. Edited by M. R. Ridley. London: Methuen, 1964.

SECONDARY SOURCES--BOOKS

Artaud, Antonin. The Theatre and Its Double. Translated by M. C. Richards. New York: Grove Press, 1958.

Beckermann, Bernard. Shakespeare at The Globe 1599-1609. New York: Macmillan, 1962.

Bradley, A. C. Shakespearean Tragedy. London: MacMillan, 1904.

Clemen. W. H. The Developement of Shakespeare's Imagery. London: Methuen, 1951.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. Shakespearean Criticism. Edited by Thomas Middleton Raysor. 2 vols. London: Dent, 1960.

Empson, William. The Structure of Complex Words. London: Chatto and Windus, 1951.

Esslin, Martin. The Theatre of The Absurd. New York: Anchor, 1961.

Fergusson, Francis. The Human Image in Dramatic Literature. New York: Anchor, 1957.

------. The Idea of A Theatre. Princeton: University Press, 1949.

Flatter, Richard. The Moor of Venice. London: Heinemann, 1950.

Frye, R. M. Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine. Princeton: University Press, 1963.

- Goddard, Harold C. The Meaning of Shakespeare. 2 vols. Chicago: University Press, 1962.
- Gorman, Margaret. General Semantics and Contemporary Thomism. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962.
- Granville-Barker, Harley. Prefaces to Shakespeare. 2 vols. Princeton: University Press, 1947.
- Hayakawa, S. I. Language in Thought and Action. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1949.
- Heilman, R. B. Magic in The Web: Action and Language in "Othello". Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1956.
- Holloway, John. The Story of The Night: Studies in Shakespeare's Major Tragedies. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961.
- Johnson, Samuel. Johnson on Shakespeare. Edited by Walter Raleigh. Oxford: University Press, 1931.
- , Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare. Edited with an Introduction by W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. New York: Hill and Wang, 1960.
- Jones, Ernest. Hamlet and Oedipus. New York: Doubleday, 1949.
- Kayser, Wolfgang. The Grotesque in Art and Literature. Translated by Ulrich Weisstein. New York: McGraw Hill, 1966. (Originally published 1957.)
- Knight, G. Wilson. The Wheel of Fire. London: OUP, 1930.
- Kott, Jan. Shakespeare Our Contemporary. Translated by Boleslaw Taborski. London: Methuen, 1964.
- Leavis, F. R. The Common Pursuit. New York: G. W. Stewart, 1952.
- Lewis, Wyndham. The Lion and The Fox: The Role of the Hero in the Plays of Shakespeare. London: Methuen, 1951. (Originally published 1927.)

Olson, Robert G. An Introduction to Existentialism. New York: Dover Publications, 1962.

Rosenberg, Marvin. The Masks of "Othello". Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961.

Rymer, Thomas. The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer. Edited by Curt Zimansky. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956.

Siegel, P. N. Shakespearean Tragedy and the Elizabethan Compromise. New York: New York University Press, 1957.

Traversi, D. A. An Approach to Shakespeare. New York: Doubleday, 1956.

SECONDARY SOURCES--ARTICLES

Bethell, S. L. "Shakespeare's Imagery: The Diabolic Images in Othello," ShS, V (1952), 62-80.

Butcher, Philip. "Othello's Racial Identity," SQ, III (1952), 243-247.

Connolly, Thomas F. "Shakespeare and the Double Man," SQ, I (1950), 30-35.

David, Richard. "Othello at Stratford, England, 1956," SS, X (1957), 131-134.

Durrenmatt, Friedrich. "Problems of the Theatre," Translated by Gerhard Nellhaus in Friedrich Durrenmatt, Four Plays. London: Jonathan Cape, 1964.

Eliot, T. S. "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," Selected Essays 1917-1932, London: Faber, 1932, 126-140.

Gardner, Helen. "The Noble Moor," in Anne Ridler, ed., Shakespeare Criticism 1935-1960. Oxford: University Press, 1963, 348-370.

Gérard, Albert. "'Alack, Poor Iago.' Intellect and Action in Othello," SJ, XCIV (1958), 218-232.

- Gerard, Albert. "'Egregiously and Ass': The Dark Side of The Moor. A View of Othello's Mind," ShS, X (1957), 98-106.
- Gerritsen, Johan. "More Paired Words in Othello," ES, XXXIX (1958), 212-214.
- Harris, Bernard. "A Portrait of a Moor," ShS, XI (1958), 89-97.
- Hawkes, Terence. "Iago's Use of Reason," SP, LVIII (April 1961), 160-169.
- Heilman, Robert B. "More Fair than Black: Light and Dark in Othello," EIC, I (1951), 313-335.
- , "Dr. Iago and His Potions," VQR, XXVIII (1952), 568-584.
- , "The Economics of Iago and Others," PMLA, LXVIII (1953), 555-571.
- Hubler, Edward. "The Damnation of Othello: Some Limitations on the Christian View of the Play," SQ, IX (1958), 295-300.
- Hunter, Edwin R. "Shakespeare's Mouthpieces: Manner of Speech as a Mark of Personality in a Few Shakespearean Characters," SR, XLVII (1939), 406-430.
- Ingram, R. W. "Hamlet, Othello, and King Lear: Music and Tragedy," SJ, C (1964), 159-172.
- Ionesco, Eugene. "Discovering the Theatre," Translated by Leonard C. Pronko in Robert W. Corrigan ed., Theatre in the Twentieth Century. New York: Grove Press, 1965, 77-93.
- Jordan, H. H. "Dramatic Illusion in Othello," SQ, I (1950), 146-152.
- Jorgensen, Paul A. "Honesty in Othello," SP, XLVII (1950), 557-567.
- Kliger, Samuel. "Othello: The Man of Judgement," MP, XLVIII (May, 1951), 221-224.
- Knights, L. C. "How Many Children had Lady Macbeth?," in Explorations, London: Chatto and Windus, 1946, 1-39.
- Lerner, Lawrence. "The Machiavel and The Moor," EIC, No. 4, IX (1959), 339-360.

- Meyerhold, Vsevolod. "Farce," Translated by Nora Beeson in Robert W. Corrigan, ed., Theatre in the Twentieth Century. New York: Grove Press, 1965, 192-206.
- Money, John. "Othello's 'It is the cause. . . ' An Analysis," ShS, VI (1953), 94-105.
- Moore, John Robert. "Othello, Iago, and Cassio as Soldiers," PQ, XXXI (1952), 189-194.
- Muir, Kenneth. "Freedom and Slavery in Othello," N & Q, New Series, I (1954), 20-21.
- Nash, Walter. "Paired Words in Othello: Shakespeare's Use of a Stylistic Device," ES, XXXIX (1958), 62-67.
- . "Postscript," ES, XXXIX (1958), 214-216.
- Nowottny, Winifred M. T. "Justice and Love in Othello," UTQ, XXI (1951-52), 330-344.
- Rand, Frank P. "The Over-Garrulous Iago," SQ, I (1950), 155-161.
- Rosenberg, Marvin. "In Defense of Iago," SQ, VI (1955), 145-158.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. "Beyond Bourgeois Theatre," translated by Rima Drell Reck in Robert W. Corrigan ed., Theatre in the Twentieth Century. New York: Grove Press, 1965, 131-140.
- . "Existentialism is a Humanism," in Walter Kauffman, ed., Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre. Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1956, 287-311.
- Siegel, Paul N. "The Damnation of Othello," PMLA, LXVIII (1953), 1068-1078.
- Smith, Philip A. "Othello's Diction," SQ, IX (1958), 428-430.
- Stoll, Elmer Edgar. "Iago not a 'Malcontent'," JEGP, LI (1952), 163-167.

Walton, J. K. "'Strength's Abundance': A View of Othello,"
RES, New Series, XI (1960), 8-17.

Webb, Henry J. "The Military Background in Othello," PQ,
 XXXI (1952), 189-194.

-----'. "'Rude am I in my Speech.'," ES, XXXIX (1958), 67-72.

Weisinger, Herbert. "Iago's Iago," UKCR, XX (1953), 83-90.

Wilson, Arthur H. "Othello's Racial Identity," SQ, IV (1953),
 209-220.

B29857